WILLIAM BLAKE'S VALA OR THE FOUR ZOAS: A CONSIDERATION OF THE TEXT, CRITICAL ESTIMATES, LITERARY BACKGROUND, AND RELATIONSHIP TO BLAKE'S OTHER WORK, TOGETHER WITH A READING OF THE POEM

ROBERT L. MACLEAN

PH.D.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

1979

ROBERT L. MACLEAN

PH.D. 18 NOVEMBER, 1979

WILLIAM BLAKE'S VALA OR THE FOUR ZOAS: A CONSIDERATION OF THE TEXT, CRITICAL ESTIMATES, LITERARY BACKGROUND, AND RELATIONSHIP TO BLAKE'S OTHER WORK, TOGETHER WITH A READING OF THE POEM

My study of The Four Zoas attempts to demonstrate how the poem is a coherent unity. Toward this objective, I approach the poem through four primary dimensions.

First, I assess how the literary tradition of the dream-vision influenced Blake's epic. I consider the Roman de la Rose, Chaucer's The Boke of the Duchesse and The Hous of Fame, Langland's Piers Plowman, Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, and Milton's Paradise Lost interpreted as a dream-vision. Significant generic influences are discovered between these works and Blake's epic, making it clear that Blake deliberately modelled The Four Zoas upon the dream-vision. The interplay between the two levels of dream and wakefulness leads directly into epistemological motifs. This dialogue is conducted through vivid autochthonous imagery, dream phantasma, dramatic conflict, and the structural devices of the literary dream which include abrupt conflation of personae, multiple perspectives dissolving in flux, and past and future tenses subsumed into a mercurial present. However, each dream work prior to Blake withdraws prematurely from the overwhelming disorientation of the dream; Blake, on the contrary, allows the dream to totally consume his personae, and refuses to withdraw until the dream transcends itself through its own imagery into a truly wakeful state.

Second, I examine the Graveyard School of eighteenth-century poetry in terms of how it influenced Blake's epic. I consider Gray, Blair, Hervey, and Blake's Last Judgment designs. In addition a comparative study is conducted between Young's Night Thoughts and The Four Zoas, finding explicit correspondences between each poet's themes, style and methodology. Blake's watercolours for Night Thoughts form an intermediate stage between Young's poem and the rapidly evolving ideas behind his own epic.

Third, an extended reading of the poem traces the motifs of the Fall, regeneration and Apocalypse to demonstrate internal continuity throughout the poem. My special concern is to indicate how the Apocalypse of Night IX rises organically from the previous Nights. A radical shift of perspective back to Albion's wakeful presence reinterprets the entire poem; Blake's revisions focus upon his initial text to reveal that eternity is contained within time. I attempt to answer why Blake never finalized his poem but died leaving it in manuscript.

Fourth, the relationship of The Four Zoas to Blake's other work is evaluated, with particular emphasis upon his early poems. My basic contention is that his first epic is synthesizing yet formative, fusing the despair of the previous poems with an apocalyptic breakthrough continued into the later two epics. Whereas in The Four Zoas Blake struggles to achieve regeneration and a valid esthetic form, thereafter he attempts to save all humanity through the act of entering the poem. Thus the process of writing the poem becomes its own resolution.

PREFACE

The following study of Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas occurs as a series of largely self-contained chapters gradually focusing upon the minute particulars of the poem itself. My special concern is to discover how the terrible beauty of Night IX's Apocalypse is born in such a dark poem and whether the poem can be read as an organic unity.

I begin by examining the textual problems of the manuscript, then survey critical estimates of the poem from Ellis and Yeats to the present, thus more clearly delineating my own interpretation. I consider the literary tradition of the dream-vision poem in chapter III, indicating how Chaucer, Langland, Bunyan and Milton's use of dream generically influenced The Four Zoas. Chapter IV approaches The Four Zoas through the evident origin or starting point of Blake's composition, Young's Night Thoughts, which is discussed in terms of the ways it affected Blake's poem. I also assess the influence of the Graveyard School of eighteenth-century English poetry upon Blake. The heart of the thesis is my reading of the poem, focusing in particular on the Apocalypse of Night IX, allowing the poem to speak for itself, with relatively

few references to Blake's other works. The relationship of The Four Zoas to the rest of Blake's poems is considered in chapter VI. Finally, my conclusion summarizes my findings.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Print Room of the British Museum for supplying the Night Thoughts illustrations used here, and of the Preston Blake Library for allowing me to photograph Blake's illustrations for The Pilgrim's Progress. I thank the Canada Council for granting me a fellowship for three years' study at the University of Edinburgh. My gratitude goes to Dr. Fred Cogswell, my undergraduate professor at the University of New Brunswick, whose love for Blake opened a new world for me and many others. Finally, I am deeply indebted to my academic supervisor, Dr. Michael Phillips, for his detailed advice, inspiration and guidance throughout all stages of this thesis.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

BT. The Book of Thel

BU. The Book of Urizen

DC. A Descriptive Catologue

FZ. The Four Zoas

GP. The Gates of Paradise

J. Jerusalem

M. Milton

MHH. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

SE. Songs of Experience

SI. Songs of Innocence

VLJ. A Vision of the Last Judgment

I. TEXTUAL PROBLEMS

It is significant that William Blake's first full-scale epic, Vala or The Four Zoas, simultaneously confronts the reader with two difficulties: the thematic and stylistic complexities of the poem itself, and an equally convoluted manuscript text. Both problems interlink, reflecting each other. The manuscript seems disjunctive because its content is so; the battling Zoas inflict their illusionary perspectives upon each other through equally desperate poetic idiom and compositorial difficulties. Indeed, given the scope of Blake's material, it is hard to see how this could be otherwise. The more expansive a vision and the more intellectual veracity is insisted upon, the more difficult it becomes to transmute that vision into esthetic form.

Hence, in more ways than one, a study of The Four Zoas[1] must begin with the physical manuscript. The situation is unusual in that Blake never relief etched or engraved his work, but died leaving it still incomplete. No final

[1] Throughout this thesis I shall provisionally use Vala to signify Blake's 'original' poem, i.e., as near as we can delineate an original, and The Four Zoas for the 'final' version; though, in fact, neither of these definitions exists in any actual sense.

authoritative version exists; and since the sole manuscript (now in the British Museum) is riddled with corrections, additions, erasures and deletions, often ambiguous or conflicting, plus a poem-within-a-poem and two Night VIIs to further complicate the issue, we do not possess a stable text. Rather it fluctuates, like the metamorphoses the Zoas undergo throughout the poem. It follows that one's reading and interpretation of The Four Zoas must constantly keep touch with the underlying textual modulations. If, however, one regards this necessity as an organic part of the work, in several senses which will be explored later in my thesis, then it ceases to be merely a paleographic enigma or even, for that matter, a flawed text.

The basic biographical information is as follows. Blake was commissioned by the printer Richard Edwards in 1796 to commit a series of watercolours to illustrate Edward Young's The Complaint, and The Consolation; or, Night Thoughts (1741-45), one of the most popular poems of the eighteenth century. He completed 537 watercolours and 43 etchings, but only the first volume of Young's poem was ever published, in June 1797, and the project collapsed. However, the venture did provide the impetus for Blake to gather the various strands of his previous mythic poems (what are now termed the Lambeth books) into one giant form which he had been gravitating toward for

some time. Originally entitled "VALA / OR / The Death and Judgement of the Ancient Man: / a DREAM / of Nine Nights," it was written on the back of the proof sheets for Young's work. The margins overflow with drawings, often explicitly sexual. Part of the importance of the manuscript is that it provides one of the few examples of Blake's rough draft illuminations.

Blake probably finished the first fair copy from rough drafts by 1797, the date on the title page. The original Vala was about 900 lines shorter than the later poem. Presumably it dealt with Vala as its central protagonist, a sexual subversion of Luvah, representing a kind of veil of nature which swathes the phenomenal world, disguising Eternity and causing the Ancient Man's sleep. This original text may have reached its climax in Night VIIB, where Vala's growing power overwhelms the other Zoas; and her predominance accounts for the full-scale description of her regeneration in the Garden of Vala episode in Night IX.

H. M. Margoliouth, in William Blake's Vala: Blake's Numbered Text,[2] has attempted to isolate the original poem by paring away all the later revisions and additions. The result is fascinating, but, as David V. Erdman

[2] Oxford, 1956. In all footnote references, place of publication is London, unless stated otherwise.

criticizes, "a somewhat hypothetical construction,"[3] since the various strata incorporating the revisions have proved impossible to accurately date or even homologize. The main strength of Margoliouth's edition is that it utilizes the original numbering which Blake gave Vala at some juncture(s), with a few exceptions. But it must be remembered that Blake never gave a final numbering to his poem, and the sheets remained loose at his death. Margoliouth places Nights I and VIII in an appendix, since these are demonstrably late additions (with the exception of an early core Night I); Nights II and III of the present poem were originally I and II. Both Margoliouth and G. E. Bentley, Jr., accept the post-1804 dating which Erdman sets for Night VIII on the basis of historical allusions to wartime England.[4] But Margoliouth does not follow his own editorial policy to recover Blake's numbered text, since parts of Nights I and VIII were in fact numbered by Blake. All indications are that Blake never reached any final stage in his poem, but rather revised more or less constantly, expanding rather than contracting. Many of these revisions may have occurred at Felpham, after September 1800. Margoliouth suggests that Vala's realistic descriptions of the sea

[3] "The Binding (et cetera) of Vala," The Library, 19 (1964), 125.

[4] Blake: Prophet Against Empire (Garden City, N. Y., 1954; rpt. & rev. 1969), p. 296.

and the identification of Tharmas as a marine god were stimulated by Blake's three year sojourn at Felpham.[5] In any case, extensive revision went on for a decade or more (until 1807?), transmuting into The Four Zoas (a very late pencil addition on the title page, deleting Vala, but not inked over nor continued into the chapter headings). The original Vala did not mention "Zoa" at all, and it is probable that Blake first used the term in Milton (24.8,76), before transferring it fait accompli.

Why such extensive revision? Bentley suggests that Blake's poverty after the failure of the Night Thoughts project and through the summer of 1800, when he received few commissions, made it impossible or impractical to attempt such an expensive project as engraving Vala.[6] Hence he used the interim to revise; but the accretions multiplied, eventually overflowing into Milton and Jerusalem, all written within the same period. A variant hypothesis is that the copperplate script of the first three Nights

[5] Op. cit., pp. xxiii-xxiv. Margoliouth's thesis is supported by Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, in Blake's Human Form Divine (1974, pp. 167-76), who notes the similarity between certain of Blake's drawings in The Four Zoas with the medieval wood carvings on the misericords in Chichester Cathedral and St. Mary's Hospital, Chichester. Blake visited Chichester, a town seven miles from Felpham, by October 2, 1800. However, it is worth remembering Algernon Charles Swinburne's recognition, in William Blake: A Critical Essay (1868; rpt. N. Y., 1967, p. 187), of the marine imagery saturating all Blake's prophetic books.

[6] William Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas: A Facsimile of the Manuscript, A Transcript of the Poem and A Study of Its Growth and Significance (Oxford, 1963), p. 160.

did at one time extend throughout the poem, and Vala was transcribed but remained unsold, thus allowing it to be revised.[7] However, Erdman points out that we need not assume Blake meant to engrave his poem at all; perhaps it was intended to be a unique Illuminated Manuscript, since he could not afford copper for such enormous plates (even Jerusalem's are far smaller), and he did possess 200 leftover blank leaves from the defunct Young project.[8]

The pattern of Blake's revisions can be traced in only a general sense. The first three Nights are copied in elegant copperplate script, with revisions in a neat modified copperplate hand,[9] finally reverting to usual

[7] An interesting analogy can be drawn with Henry David Thoreau's Walden (1857), which passed through eight complete revisions primarily because Thoreau could not find a publisher for his initial text of 1847. So he used the interim to revise, achieving a kind of objective distance from his original deeply emotional draft, and deepening its archetypal aspects, in hindsight --just as Blake seems to have done. J. Lyndon Shanley, in The Making of Walden (Chicago, 1957), has excavated these layers, uncovering a strikingly different original text, only half the length of the final. Unfortunately, such literary archaelogy has not yet worked for The Four Zoas, whose textual problems prove immensely complicated.

[8] Op. cit., p. 125. Supporting Erdman's hypothesis, which will be my conclusion also (see pp. 518-19), is the fact that the manuscript drawings, which are of the nature of what is still termed pornographic, could not have been meant for the general public.

[9] The fact that Blake painstakingly used copperplate calligraphy on quality paper would seem to indicate that at some stage he expected his poem to be finalized.

hand (often difficult to decipher and omitting minutiae, e.g., punctuation and catchwords) when the page became too crowded. The rest of the Nights are in Blake's usual hand, inscribed on blank plus inscribed sheets of the Night Thoughts paper.

Unfortunately, these three scripts cannot be used to identify homogeneous strata because, as Bentley points out in his transcript of the poem, there is no guarantee that each occurred at the same time throughout the entire poem. "The text is so overwhelmed with corrections, inversions, deletions, and additions that it is almost impossible to be certain of the form in which the poem existed at any stage of its composition."[10] An original fair copy cannot be isolated, for even the copperplate script is inscribed over previous erasures, a fact which Bentley largely ignores. A few of these erasures have been restored by Erdman with the help of infrared photography and a torch-reading glass and are incorporated in his 1965 edition of Blake's text. We cannot even safely assume that the copperplate script of the first three Nights is one uniform (early) layer, for Erdman has discovered in some of them the modified 'g' which Blake adopted after November 1802 (though he admits this may not be a hard-and-fast rule).[11]

[10] Op. cit., p. xvii.

[11] The Poetry and Prose of William Blake (N.Y., 1965; rpt. 1970), p. 738.

Furthermore, several assumed late additions were salvaged from previous erasures, most of which have not been deciphered (Erdman suggests using ultraviolet photography to recover the erased ink passages).[12]

Despite these qualifications, a few conclusions about the original Vala can be reached. Compared to the later poem it was relatively stark. The majority of the 143 symbolic names used in The Four Zoas (82% according to Bentley)[13] appear in added passages and the late Night VIII; originally the dramatis personae was limited to mainly the Zoas themselves, who were more chthonic, stripped of many later associations and attributes. It seems likely that Blake transferred into The Four Zoas his practise of Anglo-Hebrew nomenclature from Milton and/or Jerusalem. Furthermore, the explicit quasi-Biblical and -historical framework which Blake devised for his previous mythic poems and again more extensively in the final two epics is almost entirely missing from the original Vala. Hence the dream atmosphere of The Four Zoas is even more pronounced in the earlier drafts. We shall explore the ramifications of this in Chapter III, which considers the poem as a generic descendent of the traditional dream-vision poem.

[12] One looks forward with anticipation to the forthcoming facsimile of The Four Zoas edited by Cettina Magno, which will use infrared photography.

[13] Op. cit., p. 171.

A second characteristic of Vala vis-à-vis The Four Zoas is its virtual absence of explicit Christian motifs. All the New Testament nomenclature (e.g., Christ, Lamb of God, Jerusalem), plus such Blakean concepts as the Council of God, Divine Vision, Divine Hand, Seven Eyes of God, and the Limit of Contraction and Opacity are found only in added sections, pp. 122-123 of Night IX, or the extremely late Night VIII. Beulah is mentioned only briefly, negatively important in that the original Fall is gradually localized here. Los' later importance as a prophetic poet is absent; his Golgonooza is a pitiful shack compared to what it later becomes.

In short, that contrapuntal level of eternity which Blake establishes from the beginning of The Four Zoas is entirely missing from the original poem. This is a germane textual datum which must be taken into account in any consideration of the 'final' poem. But to conclude, as do critics from Ellis and Yeats to the present, that this later revisionary level represents an emergency operation whereby Blake's new graft never fused into the ailing corpus of either Albion or the poem is altogether too simplistic. All the prototypes of the later poem are present in Vala, but buried, as it were, in slag, their ontological potential unrealized. My reading of the poem in Chapter V will indicate how the later revisions do not so much change the basic structure and concepts as amplify

them, once they are reinserted within an apocalyptic context rather than a postlapsarian one.

It is tempting to trace the genesis of this extensive textual revision to the Apocalypse of Night IX, which originally contained the first elaboration of the Eternal Family, descending Luvah, and Beulah's positive function. The original Night IX almost certainly followed Night VIIB; this reinforces Northrop Frye's complaint that the Apocalypse simply starts with a bang, with no underlying rationale, and must be taken into account.[14] However, Blake revised the ending of Night VIII and the beginning of IX at least three times, presumably in an effort to mesh them.[15] A major concern of my reading of the poem will be to determine how Night IX rises organically out of the previous Nights.

When studying The Four Zoas one must keep in mind that it gestated from an altogether more condensed, pessimistic and oneiric poem. But it seems unnecessary, indeed perverse, to regard the present manuscript as two conflicting poems. The two different titles "differ in their emphasis, but each is a guide to the meaning of the poem at all stages of its composition. The alternatives

[14] Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake (Princeton, 1947; rpt. 1972), p. 308.

[15] For my analysis of this part of the poem, see pp. 403-04.

they urge on us are alternatives of perspective."[16] It may well be that Blake revised most of his poetry with the same extensive care as he did The Four Zoas. The Notebook poems ('Rossetti MS') are crowded with revisions. But the absence or extent of revisions in itself, of course, has nothing whatsoever to do with the final merit of a work of art. One need only point to Beethovan, who revised compulsively, and Mozart, who flowed forth compositions with virtually no revisions, to illustrate this fact.

Another textual problem concerns the many 'borrowed passages' in The Four Zoas. It used to be critically considered that this indicated Blake's increasing lack of interest in his manuscript, using it as a quarry for his later work. But two facts tend to disprove this view. First, at least 74 lines are lifted from earlier prophecies, i.e., America, The Song of Los, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, and The Book of Urizen; yet Blake continued to issue these works. This implies that self-quotation did not mean abandonment. On the contrary, Blake utilized his former work in The Four Zoas for definite exegetical reasons, which I will examine in Chapter VI. Second, in at least several

[16] Brian Wilkie & Mary Lynn Johnson, Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream (1978), p. 6.

instances (the amount is disputed), passages from Milton and Jerusalem were transferred to The Four Zoas. It is often impossible to prove which is the copytext and which the transcription. Cross-fertilization apparently went both ways and cannot be taken as any sign of priority.

A major issue of critical debate concerns the presence of two Nights both clearly labelled VII. Since the manuscript shows how Blake vacillated over the numbering of his Nights, it is easy to see how he could have created one too many for Young's framework of "A Dream of Nine Nights." The traditional view, held by E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats, D. J. Sloss and J. P. R. Wallis, Geoffrey Keynes and, more recently, W. H. Stevenson, David V. Erdman and Harold Bloom, is that VIIB is the earliest version, alternative with (or supplanted by) VIIA. But H. M. Margoliouth, G. E. Bentley, Jr., and Morton D. Paley,[17] to cite but a few, maintain the contrary. In either case the evidence is threefold, and we should briefly examine it:

(1) Night VIIA represents a much more hopeful version, with a long added passage at the end describing Los

[17] Energy and the Imagination: A Study in the Development of Blake's Thought (Oxford, 1970), 'Appendix B'.

uniting with his Spectre, the breaking of Enitharmon's heartgates, and the building of Golgonooza, ending with even Urizen regenerating as a baby. As such it constitutes a more mature advancement from VIIB, which is darkly pessimistic, keeping with the tenor of the whole original poem until Night IX. It seems reasonable that Blake would revise his poem toward the light of the final denouement, perhaps after Night IX was written, when he returned to articulate regenerative antecedents more lucidly. Most of the poem's revisions take this tenor. Considering that the ending of VIIA represents the most explicitly personal narrative of the poem, describing Los/William Blake and Enitharmon/Catherine Blake etching the Illuminated books, their estrangement ended, it seems unlikely that it would be rejected for the usual agony of VIIB.

Against this hypothesis, however, there is clear evidence that the final 163 lines of VIIA are late additions. Blake twice wrote "End of the Seventh Night," but erased it to continue the regeneration of Los and Enitharmon.[18] Hence the original VIIA was in fact pessimistic, and moreover dovetails neatly into VIII with the nameless shadowy Vortex (Vala) and the Tree of

[18] The first part ended at 85.25, "The double rooted Labryinth soon wavd around their heads," the second at 85.31, "In Self abasement Giving up his Domineering lust."

Mystery. This could mean that the first part of VIIA was written earlier than VIIB. If so, then the internal coherence of the original VIIA should extend into the original VIIB (whose parts were originally reversed); but, so far as I can tell, such is conspicuously lacking. Enitharmon's heartgates are not broken in VIIB, yet the original version of VIIA states "Nor could they ever be closd again" (85.14). It is also true, as Bloom observes, that Los is more primitive in VIIB;[19] but this is not really a valid argument, since Los' regenerative aspects are advanced primarily in VIIA's revised ending.

(2) The ending of VIIA fits directly into the beginning of VIII. This suggests that VIIB was meant to be excluded.[20]

[19] The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. Erdman (New York, 1965; rpt. 1970), 'Commentary,' p. 885.

[20] Furthermore, evidence exists to indicate that Blake attempted to extend the final two pages of VIIA into the beginning of VIII. In VIII.100a.1-2, he inserted a marginal note, "Los stood &c," which Erdman interprets to mean the final page 90 of VIIA was once meant to be placed here, beginning with "Los sat [originally "stood" but deleted] in Golgonooza" (90.2) and extending to "Startled was Los he found his Enemy Urizen now / In his hands" (90.64-65), which would fit into VIII's "Into his hands" (100a.2). Since pages 87/90 are a single late passage, this would splice VIIA firmly into VIII, which implies that VIIB was intended to be eliminated at this late date (see Erdman, Ibid., p. 758). However, Erdman seems to forget that this would have made Blake one Night short, and therefore perhaps VIIB was intended to occur as the definitive VII. Also, if VIIA were combined with VIII a far too lengthy Night would result, out of proportion to the rest of the Nights. Finally, the fact that Blake did not follow his own textual direction here would indicate that he still wanted the remnant VIIB retained.

(3) Bentley first discovered stitch-marks on The Four Zoas manuscript showing that all the sheets with elegant script (pp. 1-18, 23-42) were once gathered into one group, and the Night Thoughts proof-sheet pages into another (pp. 43-84, 111-112). The first group contained Nights I-III, the second IV-VIIA; but VIIB was never stitched, and lay uncollected with the final two Nights. Partly from this evidence, Bentley deduced that VIIA represents the early version. Since Nights VIII and parts of IX are demonstrably later than the stitched Nights, Bentley concludes that VIIB was too.

But we cannot assume, on the basis of the stitching, that VIIB was meant to be rejected by Blake, since the unstitched pages also include VIII and IX, and it is ludicrous to suppose that particularly the final Apocalypse was meant to be absent from "A Dream of Nine Nights." Nor can we determine chronological dating on this basis, because, as Erdman reasonably argues, VIIB may have been written so early that VIIA was stitched to take its place.[21] All the stitching evidence does is clarify that at one time somebody intended the sequence VI-VIIA. What both Bentley and Erdman seem to overlook (unless I am being obtuse here) is that the manuscript lay in loose

[21]"The Binding (et cetera) of Vala," p. 122.

uncollected pages at the time of Blake's death, which should mean that the stitching was but a temporary compilation, finally rejected, or perhaps not even committed in the first place, by Blake. At his death, Blake did give the manuscript to his friend John Linnell, which indicates that he wanted it to be preserved.

My conclusion, therefore, is that both Night VIIs must be considered integral to the poem, since Blake retained both, never cancelling either with the full-page strokes he did for large portions of Night I. Internal evidence suggests that VIIA was written later, but the issue remains open.[22] Decidedly, one should not regard the sequence VIIA-VIIB as intentional, nor vice versa. If, then, neither is to be excluded, one may reach one of two conclusions: either Blake never resolved the issue, and it must only add to the ambiguity and fragmentation of the poem; or both versions belong organically to the poem, in somewhat the same manner as a stream

[22] The textual complexities in analyzing the two Night VIIs are only intensified by recent studies in a special issue of Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly (12, No. 2, Fall 1978) devoted to The Four Zoas. Here opposing arguments are advanced for the priority of either Night. For a synopsis of the problem, see Brian Wilkie & Mary Lynn Johnson's Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream, pp. 271-73. On the basis of internal parallelisms with The Book of Urizen, I speculate on page 511 that Night VIIA may have been written later than VIIB.

divides around an island or rock, yet returns united on the far side. Surely it is a dangerous editorial or critical policy to assume one's author--particularly one so astute as Blake--did not know what he was doing, and that his work is abortive from the start.

From these considerations, it follows that a study such as my present thesis, part of whose concern is to investigate the Apocalypse of Night IX to determine whether it is initiated within the body of the poem, must naturally take extreme care regarding the internal continuity of the text. Causality, difficult enough to trace in Blake, is made even more problematical by the fluid text. It will be my contention that the thematic and stylistic issues of The Four Zoas are so unique a far greater sequential coherence is present than has yet been critically acknowledged. And yet this coherence remains finally tangential, for one of the poem's basic tenets is the ambivalence, or even absence, of any linear narrative whatsoever, replaced in turn by more cyclic, simultaneous and nontemporal structures derived partly from the traditional dream-vision poem.

It is possible to focus too closely on the textual problems, relegating interpretive difficulties to presumed

anomalies in the manuscript. Conceivably if we did possess a completed Illuminated text, then certain elements which now concern us as paleographic may turn out to be strictly organic. For example, if we did not know beforehand that the 'Christian layer' is almost entirely a later revision, then its jarring abrupt tone becomes intrinsic to the poem itself, not a textual defect. The leaps should remain as they are, and the reader's mind try to leap also, rather than denouncing them as "inconsistent patchwork revision."[23] Again, one must remember that the entire epic occurs as dramatic-voice narrative. Each of the personae has only a relative reality, so long as the central character Albion sleeps. The various accounts of the Fall are contradictory because they depend upon distorted memories, each trying to trace back what has happened but never wholly succeeding because each fallen entity is, by definition, incomplete. This disjunction is organic to the poem, not simply caused by carelessness or incoherence on Blake's part, as is often assumed.[24]

[23] Bentley, op. cit., p. 165.

[24] For my analysis of The Four Zoas' use of dramatic voice and dream-perspective, see pp. 136-39, 158, 210-16, 354-55.

The basic text I propose to use in this thesis is The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, edited by David V. Erdman.[25] I choose this edition for three reasons: it reproduces Blake's original punctuation and spelling; it goes beyond the Bentley transcript by using infrared photography to recover all deleted readings thus far deciphered; and variant readings are given in the Textual Notes, differing from Bentley in over 100 lines, more plausibly, in my estimation. But I disagree with Erdman relegating Night VIIB to the end of the poem, as well as his belief that it was almost certainly rejected in favour of VIIA:[26] here I will follow W. H. Stevenson's text, The Poems of William Blake (1971), which prints VIIA-VIIB as alternative but not sequential Nights. I shall consult both Margoliouth and Bentley's editions where relevant. Erdman himself, however, concludes his assessment of The Four Zoas' textual problems by admitting: "The complexities of the MS, in short, continue to defy analysis and all assertions about meaningful physical groupings or chronologically definable layers of composition or inscription must be understood to rest on partial and ambiguous evidence."[27]

[25] N. Y., 1965; rpt. 1970.

[26] Erdman has since retracted his arrangement, and now views both Nights as "a continuous pair of chapters with identical titles." See Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly, Fall 1978, pp. 135-139, esp. p. 137.

[27] The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 739.

II. CRITICAL ESTIMATES FROM 1893 TO 1978

Nineteenth-century criticism concerned itself primarily with the question of Blake's sanity. The Prophetic Books, if read at all, were regarded as evidence of psychic disintegration into "insane cosmogony, blatant mythology, and sonorous aberration of thoughts and theories,"[1] and either praised or condemned (or both) for that reason. William Rossetti commented that several years in solitary confinement might "piece together their myths, trace their connection, reason out their system."[2] It is symptomatic that Western man indeed had to reach a critical stage of twentieth-century alienation for the mature Blake to speak to him.

It was not until E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats published their three volume study and edition of Blake that the import of Blake's later work became apparent.[3]

[1] Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Blake: A Critical Essay (1868; rpt. N. Y., 1967), p. 189. Neither Swinburne, Gilchrist nor the Rossetti brothers mention The Four Zoas, though it is probable that they saw the manuscript.

[2] The Poetical Works of William Blake (1875), p. cxxii.

[3] The Works of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical (1893), 3 vols. All subsequent references to each critical work will be cited parenthetically in my text.

Their editions transcribed and published The Four Zoas for the first time, making it available to the public, albeit in a totally inaccurate version. Unfortunately Ellis and Yeats indulged in the unethical practise of 'restoring' those lines whose "irregularity seemed to cry out for revision" (II, 300)--lest we be sanctimonious, a practise continued with Blake's extremely important 'minutia' until Erdman published his edition of the texts in 1965, and revived once again in the annotated Blake edited by Stevenson.[4] Though failures as textual editors, Ellis and Yeats elaborated Blake's symbolic "System" complete with complex diagrams, establishing the grounds for modern

[4] The Poems of William Blake (1971). Stevenson comments that the modernization of spelling and punctuation proved to be "a task of considerable nicety. Blake's own punctuation in the Illuminated Books is at best rhetorical and at worst quite irrational; and in the MSS, most of all The Four Zoas, it is often non-existent" (p. xii). He admits that his practise "meant losing the individual flavour of Blake's pages." It is extraordinary that such liberties are still taken with one of English literature's greatest poets. One is reminded of the first British editions of e. e. cummings, which mutilated the poet's original punctuation (which includes, of course, deliberate absence and modulation of punctuation) because they could not believe he was serious in his radical innovations. In the case of Blake's illuminated books, the painstaking labour and cost of etching each word upon copperplate would at least imply that Blake gave serious consideration to his 'minutia.' Not only the flavour but much of the substance of Blake is lost if we disregard his original intentions.

scholarship. Since The Four Zoas first articulated all the Zoas as interrelated, Ellis regarded it as the seedbed of all Blake's symbols, indeed the greatest poem ever written.[5]

But Yeats criticizes Blake's revisions as being solely thematic, not stylistic: "His own corrections are always changes of symbol or insertion of fresh figure, --never are they the much-needed literary emendations of his evident slips" (II, 299). How a fellow poet so acute as Yeats and with so much in common with Blake could draw this conclusion is puzzling; but practically every subsequent critic objects to the quality of The Four Zoas' verse in similar terms. The status of Blake's first epic is regarded from the beginning of its critical reception as enigmatic, if not entirely equivocal.

Ellis and Yeats concoct an ingenuous explanation for the apparent conflict between the two titles of the poem: the later revisions are the result of "a long contemplation" (II, 295) after scribbling the first draft in a trance through high-speed dictation from astral spirits, which accounts for the gaps and lack

[5] The Real Blake (1907), p. 411.

of transition in the text. The final poem becomes "a sort of hybrid" (II, 299) belonging to two distinct poetic periods with different styles. Ellis attempted to order the manuscript sheets without success, concluding, "it is only possible to conjecture the sequence" (II, 300)--a textual problem which, we have seen, persists.

S. Foster Damon's William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols is the first scholarly study of The Four Zoas,[6] as well as of the prophetic books in general. His detailed textual commentary remains particularly valuable. Damon praises The Four Zoas for two excellences: its scope--"one of the greatest plans in all literature" (164), expanding the minor prophetic myths into a dual history of the cosmos and individual psychology; and its lyricism, which often approaches the simplicity of the Songs. Damon is the first critic to emphasize the structural importance of Night VIIA, where Los' union with his Spectre and Emanation initiates his mature artistry; and of Night VIII, whose culmination of darkness is "essential in the scheme of salvation;

[6] 1924; rpt. 1958.

the errors must be completely embodied before they can be reorganized and dealt with. Not until then can Man be saved and return to his original condition in Eternity" (162). Almost every later critic has agreed and elaborated upon these two points. Damon extols the poetic vitality of the Apocalypse: "Practically all of Night the Ninth challenges comparison with anything else of its kind" (164).

Damon lists several narrative repetitions and inconsistencies which seem to be flaws.[7] But though admitting the occasional incoherence of the manuscript, he maintains Blake was trying to avoid the frozen formality of Spenser's Faerie Queene. The brunt of interpretation hence falls squarely on the reader as an active participant with the poem. Damon makes the following pertinent remark:

> One is tempted to apologize for the faults of The Four Zoas, but it is hardly necessary, and even a little absurd. Obvious as they are, its merits are more obvious. The epic

[7] Op. cit., p. 164. However, they are not flaws but misinterpretations on Damon's part. For example, the tale of Urthona's fall into Los and Enitharmon is told twice because the flashback is a constant device throughout the poem; Golgonooza is not built twice but begins in Night V in crude iron form which only later becomes refined; Satan and the Saviour are perennial states in the human heart, Night VIII discovers, and not merely historical persons. Other critics (e.g., Sloss & Wallis) also consider the repetition of similar or identical events in the poem to be a flaw, but in fact this is a deliberate technique which Blake uses for important reasons.

> of course is not finished: Blake never gave it the final rereading during which a mere stroke of the pen here and there would have prevented many repetitions . . . Nevertheless, these difficulties were at least partly deliberate, being due to Blake's fear of producing nothing but a formal 'Allegory.'
> (164)

Damon's simple observation here inverts the consensus of criticism we shall encounter, but is not taken up until Helen T. McNeil's essay in 1970:[8] the problem does not lie primarily with the poem's faults, but rather with the reader's misapprehension of the poem. Damon later elaborates upon this point in A Blake Dictionary: "This technique is closest to our deeper mental processes, and it was Blake's ideal--complete freedom of the imagination."[9] Furthermore, Damon continues, Blake was deliberately creating a dream-technique--a hint which my next chapter on the generic relationship of the dream-vision poem to The Four Zoas develops.

If Damon represents a landmark in sensitive criticism

[8] "The Formal Art of The Four Zoas," Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton, 1970), pp. 373-390.

[9] 1965; rpt. 1973, p. 143.

of The Four Zoas, the two volume edition of Blake's texts edited by D. J. Sloss and J. P. R. Wallis reverts back to the previous century's accusation of Blake's incomprehensibility.[10] They regard the main value of the poem as "a bridge, broken and unsure, yet passable, across the chasm" (II, 7) between the Lambeth books and the later two epics. In their view, Blake became immured in "perversely contrived and too jealously conserved symbolism" (II, 108); The Four Zoas "marks the nadir of this desperate mental pilgrimage, where Blake was overborne and drawn into the morass of his own making." It suffers from "a strange critical ataxy" (II, 109: i.e., a loss of muscular co-ordination) whereby Blake's genius for focusing on minute particulars, which served him well enough in shorter lyrics, strangled any larger poetic form trying to emerge. "No other hypothesis but that of intellectual or aesthetic near-sightedness of this kind can explain the disregard of unity and coherence with which he patched and cancelled and interpolated."

Sloss and Wallis are the first critics to maintain that the original Vala was shattered by subsequent revisions of "a reinterpreted Christianity, which

[10] The Prophetic Writings of William Blake (Oxford, 1926), 2 vols.

certainly does not grow naturally out of the elaborated myth of the Fall" (II, 141)--a major criticism continued by Margoliouth, Bentley and Paley, among others.[11] They maintain that whereas the primary emphasis of the earlier poem was to delineate the Fall, after a conversion Blake's emphasis switched toward the motif of regeneration, but this reversal spelled disaster for the unity of the poem. This Christian imposition phases out the anarchic Orc of the Lambeth books, leaving him "virtually functionless, not-withstanding the large place he continues to hold in the central myth." Noting that Night IX is one of the earliest relics of the original poem (a textual datum supported later by Bentley), they assert that the revisions alter the conclusion so much that "interpretation becomes in great degree a process of guessing" (II, 142).

But even at guessing, Sloss and Wallis show a singular lack of empathy. Los' pulling down of the sun and moon with his "vegetable hands" (FZ 117.6) at the beginning of Night IX is "a reference to the imperfection of Los' spiritual powers that cannot be explained" (I, 289). Of course, Los never achieves perfect stature anywhere in the poem, and is never meant to; this criticism results from reading back his later function in Milton

[11] For my objections to this view, see pp. 46-50.

and Jerusalem into The Four Zoas, a practise which cannot be countenanced when one considers the poem as an individual unit. It is a common critical error to regard the Prophetic Books as a whole, and switch from one to another to criticize the poem at hand or to synthesize them for some quintessential Blakean philosophy. Sloss and Wallis regard the Garden of Vala episode in Night IX to hold "no apparent connexion with any other part of The Four Zoas, and its independent value seems negligible" (I, 290). Yet we shall see that this episode is crucial to the regeneration of Vala, Enion and Tharmas, as well as linking subtly with Night IX and the rest of the poem, for it is in this Arcadian dream-garden that the Fall initially occurs.[12] The "faintings, dyings, revivings and re-dyings" of the various characters are considered grossly redundant, though Blake uses repetition deliberately to illustrate that the Fall occurs at any single instant in the poem. Blake's "obsession" with the opposition of male and female (which, one notes, he announces as a specific theme in his revised sub-title) is "carried far beyond the point necessary for the adequate statement of his doctrine"

[12] Almost every critic dismisses the Garden of Vala episode as frivolous. My reading disagrees; see pp. 420-28.

(I, 142).[13] But even the intellectual content of the Prophetic Books is disparaged as "slight, and obscured by the arbitrary symbols" (II, 105).

Blake was so discouraged by his manuscript, Sloss and Wallis conclude, that he abandoned it, and its main value lies in its crude articulations of motifs which appear in the later two epics in more finished form. But it is difficult to see how Sloss and Wallis support their contention that the narrative tendency of Milton and Jerusalem is toward simplicity. Considering these critics' total blindness to reading the poem on its own merits, it is perhaps a blessing in disguise that they conclude, "detailed interpretation is impossible" (I, 143).

Sloss and Wallis isolate the revised ending of Night VIIA as the keystone of the poem, which "unpremeditatively" (I, 138) caused the motif of regeneration to begin

[13] The later term unfortunately crops up repeatedly in Blake criticism, as if Blake were the founder of a doctrinaire theology or dialectic. It is important to remember that he does not formulate systematic doctrines, but rather creates metaphors which are in a constant state of metamorphosis, and in which the reader is invited --in fact, forced--to participate.

which ultimately destroyed continuity. J. Middleton Murry's William Blake also maintains that Night VIIA is the crux, but does not condemn the poem for that reason.[14] Murry views the ending of VIIA as replacing an earlier VIIB: here the sinister Urizen of the Lambeth books is transformed into a weeping infant, Enitharmon from a cruel mistress into a compassionate help-mate, and a primitive Los into an active prophetic artist. All these changes hinge upon Los' embrace of his Spectre (whom Murry unaccountably identifies with Urizen; rather he is the Spectre of Urthona), an act synonymous with what Milton amplifies as self-annihilation. "Each of the implacable opposites recognizes that he himself is the cause of what is hateful in the other" (194). This realization changes a sterile negation into a viable contrary.

However, Murry sensibly does not insist that VIIA was the literal biographical crisis causing Vala to mutate, only that here Blake first became aware of the philosophical change his poem was struggling toward. Actually, "the redemption of Urizen was in Blake's mind when he began the MS of Vala in 1797. Blake's ensuing struggle was to be assured of this redemption as

[14] 1933.

experience" (328). As a description of this process, Murry cites a passage from Milton (21.8-10): "For man cannot know / What passes in his members till periods of Space & Time / Reveal the secrets of Eternity."

In other words, a "long period of hesitation" (157) wherein Blake refused to commit himself to a final engraved version becomes a natural concomitant of the dual levels of Vala/The Four Zoas--the same point made by Ellis and Yeats.[15] After VIIA, Murry claims, Blake underwent "a fundamental change in the treatment of his own themes" which "necessitates the growth of a new symbolism" (170). This stylistic and thematic transformation leads directly into Milton, not Vala.

But Murry's argument here must remain hypothetical because, on the basis of our present physical knowledge of the manuscript, it is impossible to state with any certainty that Blake revised VIIA before he began Milton. It is just as possible that Milton was begun earlier, concurrently, or later. To base any interpretation upon the ambiguous chronology of both texts is equivocal.

It is refreshing that Murry does not condemn the poem for its presumed inconclusiveness but

[15] Op. cit., II, 295.

rather recognizes its seminal significance: its "seeming chaos is the apparent confusion which attends swift and precipitate growth: the husks of the old are incessantly being split in sunder under the urge of the new realization" (171). Now this is Los and Enitharmon's explicit task in Night VIII, and it is germane that on the basis of historical allusions Erdman positively identifies this Night as the latest to be written. It thus seems certain that Night VIII's emphasis upon furious creative labour, complex genealogical linkages and Anglo-Hebraic nomenclature more properly belongs to the period of the last two epics. But Murry fails to explain why the entire poem was not "incessantly being split in sunder" by this transformation. Since Blake did not revise the entire poem under the aegis of his new insights, one must assume that either he was uncaring or unable to, or that he did not do so for specific reasons.

Furthermore, the presence of two contradistinctive levels in the poem does not necessarily mean its failure. On the contrary, if one examines Blake's earlier work, particularly the Lambeth books, it will be seen that a level of post-lapsarian suffering accompanied by images of spatial and temporal restriction alternates with an eternal level either implicitly or explicitly. Finally, since both final epics also utilize two

primary levels of meaning, I conclude that this dualistic structure in The Four Zoas is deliberate.[16]

Mark Schorer views The Four Zoas as a poetic defeat though a structural triumph:

> He completed the system, but at the expense of the poem . . . The Four Zoas, unfinished as it is, marks the crucial transition in Blake's development, because in it he found at last the means by which he could adjust his visionary temperament to the social insights that he wished to express.[17]

For Schorer, the poem synthesizes a precarious balance between external and internal, history and psychology, each substantiating the other in a dialectic which develops from the original innocence/experience of the Songs. He suggests that a genuine Apocalypse was blocked before this point because Blake could not evolve a poetic form combining both socio-political and psychological motifs. (The Lambeth books do succeed in this respect, but not on an epic scale.)

[16] I shall discuss this technique at length in Chapter VI, which considers the relationship of The Four Zoas to Blake's other work.

[17] William Blake: The Politics of Vision (N. Y., 1946), pp. 310 & 337.

Vala succeeds in amplifying the previous metaphorical fragments into "a central, rounded structure" which, however, begins "a tragic reversal" (429) at the instant of its balance, and disintegrates not only into The Four Zoas but also the failure (to Schorer) of the subsequent two epics. Echoing Sloss and Wallis, Schorer attributes this failure to Blake's inability to maintain an epic form which in turn results from the sheer power of his "spiritual kaladescope" (435) generating brilliant single images to the detriment of the whole. Schorer's book concludes:

> Blake was a slave to vision as other men are to cruelty or avarice or sensuality or opium, and the consequence for him was the same as it is for them--a narrowing of individuality and a final disregard for the order beyond one's own. We become what we behold.
> (435)

More specifically, Schorer attributes the failure of The Four Zoas to Blake's increasing reluctance to use fixed allegorical modes. Such an endeavor, he maintains, is intellectually valid but esthetically doomed:

> As poetry, it was disastrous to take this way of showing that states of mind, involving the whole being, are in a constant flux . . . The possibilities are both too vast and too complex for form.
> (338)

Now this criticism that Blake by definition could not succeed in The Four Zoas because he was attempting

too much is repeated by various critics. Catherine Findley Smith's "Pictoral Language in The Four Zoas" provides a representative example:

> It is true the structure of the poem shows inadequate development of impetus toward total apocalypse. It might be said, however, that this lack of manifest presentation is an accurate reflection of subject matter. Comprehensive changes in awareness certainly occur, but the causes of those changes are not entirely observable, traceable, or accessible to arrangement into the patterns of objectification which constitute an art form. Possibly, then, this flaw in the poem's structure is unavoidable, in view of Blake's faithfulness to the real nature of his topic.[18]

But is it a flaw? If one examines the roots of classical apocalyptic literature in Jewish and Christian models, it will be seen that the meaning of the revelation (generally occurring in a series of dreams, like Blake's poem) is never made explicit until the final Day of Judgment. Only at this juncture, when God enters history in order to consume it, does the entire body of previous poetic imagery achieve its ultimate relevance. It should be obvious to any sensitive reader that Blake did not know, in the initial dark Nights of Vala, how his personae and by extension himself could achieve regeneration. This constitutes the source of his despair, and we belittle it if we do not perceive that

[18] Diss. Univ. of N. Carolina at Chapel Hill 1972, p. 97.

struggle as genuine. Yet it is a mark of his achievement that he was able to articulate so many dimensions of history and psychology in the first place, which after all is the specific generic concern of the epic as well as myth. Schorer is therefore incorrect that Blake's theme is too vast for esthetic form. The more abstract the writer's concern, the more his ideas must be clothed in empirical imagery: this was Blake's task. It is one of Blake's most fundamental structural principles that every object and condition is in a state of flux, and whenever it attempts to achieve any sort of stasis --as, for example, Urizen constantly builds monolithic structures throughout the poem--it invariably collapses. Certainly the difficulties of portraying this motif in art are immense, but all three of Blake's epics affirm that it is not impossible.

It is symptomatic of the failure of Schorer's interpretation that he regards Night IX as merely "an unusually sustained piece of impassioned rhetoric" (332) unsatisfactory in its political implications. "The final vision of millennial renewal of nature doesn't give us a glimpse of heaven, but a vision of 'the world made better'"(339). But the attempt to construct a heavenly millennium belongs to Urizen in this poem; it is Blake's concern not to give us a glimpse of heaven but rather a totally immanent reconstruction of man's

visionary potential. Furthermore, suffering continues unabated through Night IX, and is only resolved in one man--Albion. Blake never intended to portray a universal millennium. Thomas R. Frosch's observation is apt: "The resurrection in The Four Zoas is . . . based on a reorganization of action, rather than a final repose from it."[19] Finally, the poem occurs as a dream which does not definitively end until the colophon, and therefore Night IX cannot be considered as a literal historical resolution.

Northrop Frye's Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake crystalizes the consensus of The Four Zoas' criticism.[20] He regards the poem as "the greatest abortive masterpiece in English literature . . . Anyone who cares about either poetry or painting must see in its unfinished state a major cultural disaster" (269). As an autonomous piece, Night IX is finally given full recognition:

> There is nothing like the colossal explosion of creative power in the ninth Night of The Four Zoas anywhere else in English poetry . . . Blake seems to have found his way back to the very headwaters of Western imagination,

[19] The Awakening of Albion (1974), p. 141.

[20] Princeton, 1947; rpt. 1972.

> to the crystalline purity of vision of the Völuspa or the Muspilli, where the end of time is perceived, not as a vague hope, an allegory or an indigestible dogma, but as a physical fact as literal as a battle and as imminent as death.
> (305-6)

But Frye doubts whether this Apocalypse originates organically from the poem, and views it instead as a gigantic wish-fulfillment. His famous critique has never been seriously challenged, so far as I know, with the single indirect exception of a remark by Ronald L. Grimmes,[21] and should be quoted in full as representative of the view my reading will oppose:

> Gorgeous as it unquestionably is, one eventually comes to wonder, in studying it, how far this ninth Night is the real climax of the vision, and how far it has been added as an effort of will, perhaps almost of conscience. Had Blake's Ode to Joy any inner logic connecting it with the rest of the work beyond a purely emotional requirement of an allegro finale? Certainly there is little connection between its opening and the close of the preceding Night. The Last Judgment simply starts off with a bang, as an instinctive shudder of self-preservation.
> (308)

Frye goes on to posit that Orc originates the Apocalypse in an inexplicable resurgence of his old anarchism. This cannot, however, be the case because it is specifically Los' act of tearing down the sun and moon which initiates the Apocalypse in the first

[21] For my discussion of Grimmes' analysis, see pp. 70-71.

ten lines of Night IX, and Frye (as well as all other critics) misinterprets this act when he terms it merely "an instinctive shudder of self-preservation." On the contrary, it is the single most important iconic event of the poem, as my reading will argue:[22] "Then fell the fires of Eternity" (IX.117.10). Now it is true that these mental flames of the Apocalypse are at first associated with Orc ("And all the while the flames of Orc follow" [125.12] Urizen's plowing, which "heat the black mould & cause / The human harvest to begin" [125.19-20]). But the socio-political dimension of the Apocalypse is only its first stage, resolving into deeper dimensions of self-regeneration and the renewal of authentic relationships between each Zoa, his Emanation and finally all the Zoas within Albion. It is characteristic of these flames that they do not originate from any single source but rather from the interior combustion of each element and each entity's "spectrous" nature which spontaneously annihilates itself when the flashpoint is reached through Los' initial act. Manuscript page 126 describes Orc's flames destroying himself, since he is totally spectrous: "And now fierce Orc had quite consumd himself in Mental flames / Expending all his energy against

[22] See pages 398-401.

the fuel of fire" (1-2). At this point he reverts back into his true persona, Luvah ("Demon . . . of Smoke" [4]), to undergo further regeneration in the dream-garden of Vala. Yet it is significant that even after his extinction, the apocalyptic flames continue (e.g., the Human Grapes "in fierce flames consuming" [136.22]). It is not until the final 31 lines that Albion is able to walk out of these flames (138.23): yet even at this penultimate juncture, the flames remain during a millennial state in the stars and the furnaces of Urthona deep beneath the earth. I conclude, therefore, that Orc cannot be the author of the Apocalypse as Frye postulates, but rather that a complex dialectic of regeneration exists in Night IX which achieves its resolution only when we see its interconnections with the rest of the poem.

Frye maintains that The Four Zoas presents the Fall; but "it has not given us an imaginatively coherent account of how we can get from eighteenth-century Deism to a Last Judgment through the power of Los, not Orc" (309). As supportive evidence, he points both to the inadequacy of any previous regenerative sequence, and the fact that Milton begins where Night VIII ends. The "missing link" (323) between the two is considered to be Los' vision of Golgonooza, which is most highly developed in Milton. Jerusalem's Apocalypse, on the

other hand, is considered to be more successful because it deliberately mutes its climax. Instead of Night IX's "dazzling pyrotechniques" (357), it is marked somewhat as baroque music, by slowly intensifying the original theme. Finally, Frye follows Murry in identifying Night VIIA as the real climax of the poem, which apparently came to Blake unpremeditated, causing him to abandon first the previously written Night VIIB and then the entire poem.

In rebuttal, my reading of the poem shall argue will that the same motifs which Frye extols as occurring in the short revised ending of Night VIIA were also reached by Blake in Night IX. Here the Apocalypse includes each Zoa's (not merely Los') unification with his Spectre and Emanation, forgiveness, self-annihilation, Urizen's return to "radiant youth" (121.12) directly parallel to his return to an "infant / Lovely" (90.66-7) in Night VIIA, and in fact an entire logic of regeneration which meshes with precision into the previous Nights, causing the poem to be revealed in a new light.

A further criticism of Frye's thesis is that he ignores the fact that the revised Night VIIA not only divagates into Milton but resolves and amplifies motifs in the rest of the poem as well. Again, it is not strictly true that Los is the sole visionary hero

of the poem, as maintained by Frye, Ellis and Yeats,[23] Damon, Sloss and Wallis, Murry and others. Los' emergence into prophetic stature is made possible only because Enitharmon takes the first step toward regeneration by relating honestly and sexually with the Spectre of Urthona, and then opening her broken heart-gates to Los. The single most important figure who initiates regeneration thus becomes the mysterious Spectre of Urthona. In point of fact the poem insists that Los is "the Spectre of Prophecy . . . the delusive Phantom" (IX.139.6) who must become subsumed into his true persona, Urthona. This hinges upon the crucial scene of Night VIIA.86, where "Mingling together with his Spectre [i.e., Los] the Spectre of Urthona / Wondering beheld the Centre opend" (2-3). It is the Spectre of Urthona who in both cases initiates an embrace with Enitharmon and Los, who are avatars of himself. Finally, the purpose of Los' artistic labours in the revised ending of VIIA and throughout VIII is motivated again by the Spectre, which is to "destroy / That body he created" (VIIA.87.4-5: i.e., Los)--precisely the situation opening Night IX. This point is ignored

[23] "Los is Blake," Yeats asserts confidently (op. cit., I, 12). Yet Ellis and Yeats regard Los' renaissance as destroying the original poem. Of course, Blake is not only Los, but all the other Zoas and personae as well. His task is to subsume these faculties within a single unity (Albion), rather than within the artistic and provisional function of Los who disappears totally after the beginning of Night IX.

by every critic I have encountered, and is based, quite simply, on a misreading of Blake's text.[24]

H. M. Margoliouth attempts to isolate Blake's original Vala, with fascinating but limited results considering that the earliest strata of text cannot be proved homogeneous.[25] His detailed textual commentary will frequently be consulted during my reading of the poem. Margoliouth emphasizes that "the imaginative quality of this rather odd epic is of more importance than its symbolic or allegoric significance" (xv), thus circumventing the poem's presumed contradictions. Though his plea to experience the Zoas as "real characters not allegorical personifications" (xxii) is a much needed corrective, I fail to see why his acknowledgement of the poem's dream quality and depth imagery should preclude a corresponding depth of explicit symbolism. Margoliouth, too, regards Blake's later revisions as detrimental: "It is a pity that he did not publish Vala before his poetic idiom

[24] For my detailed analysis of this scene, see my reading on pp. 392-94, 400.

[25] William Blake's Vala: Blake's Numbered Text (Oxford, 1956)

changed and he spoilt the poem by incongruous additions, but the changes not only in his idiom but in his Christianity must have made him feel that there was much to do" (xxvi). Once again we are given the spectacle of a critic chiding Blake for naughtily "spoiling" his own poem.

G. E. Bentley, Jr.'s facsimile of The Four Zoas' manuscript is invaluable for close study, though his compilations into various layers remain problematical.[26] Like Margoliouth, Bentley notes that the original poem is almost wholly devoid of overt Christianity, and that the subsequent Christian revisions are a kind of unassimilated deus ex machina destroying any continuity the original poem might have had. Bentley attributes these revisions both to a Blakean enlightenment, probably recounted in a letter to Hayley of 23 October 1804, and to a deadlock failure in Vala itself: "Blake's myth and his personal relationships seem to have reached an impasse; the intervention of Christ does not provide a very satisfactory solution to either problem" (175). Referring to Blake's several revisions

[26] William Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas: A Facsimile of the Manuscript, A Transcript of the Poem, and A Study of Its Growth and Significance (Oxford, 1963).

of the ending of Night VIII and the beginning of IX in the apparent effort to mesh Apocalypse with contemporary history, Bentley charges:

> Here we have Blake's great failing demonstrated openly and distinctly; he did not lack energy or inspiration, but somehow he never got around to reconciling the cross-purposes in his poem or smoothing over the awkward transitions from an early draft to a late one. Many passages in this Prophecy are great poetry, and some are great rhetoric, but because of his inconsistent patch-work revision Blake never wove it into a genuine whole.
> (165)

The result, rephrasing Frye, is "the most ambitious, and perhaps most tragic, failure in the literature of the 18th-century" (192).

But Bentley undercuts his own thesis by charging that the engraved epics Milton and Jerusalem also share the same structural failures as the 'incomplete' manuscript of The Four Zoas. "When the sequence of parts of a continuous narrative is obscure and of legitimate alternative interpretation, the result is a major failure" (191). Of course, this is simply not true. A work of literature need not contain a single demarcated sequence, and recent scholarship is just beginning to explore the uniqueness of Blake's multi-dimensional structures. Ambivalence, repetition, obscurity, cyclicism, prerationality, dream-landscapes and -images, simultaneity, dislocation of tense, distorted syntax and punctuation, and surrealism

in Blake are deliberate devices to force the Urizen-like critical mind to involve its other faculties--including the Emanations with their emotions--within the composite act of reading/viewing as a fundamentally seamless unity.

It would be appropriate at this point to question the critique that Blake underwent a conversion of a Christian tenor which resulted in a series of revisions causing the original Vala to collapse.

In the first place, the 23 October 1804 letter cited by Bentley does not recount a specifically religious conversion, let alone a Christian one, but rather was inspired by Blake's visit to the London Truchsessian Gallery's August 1803 exhibition of paintings by masters of the classical tradition.[27] Its imagery links explicitly to The Four Zoas, and probably is taken from that poem: therefore it is more reasonable to postulate that it refers to Blake's resolution of the Fall of man within the poem. Bentley assumes, perversely, quite the opposite: that an exterior event unrelated to the original Vala caused the poem to disintegrate through revisions anomalous to its original intent and style. This is to ignore the importance of Blake's

[27] See The Letters of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (1956), pp. 136-38, n.p. 137.

struggle within the poem, and the fact that the resolution expressed in Blake's letter refers to an esthetic and interpersonal (with his wife) victory.

Second, John Beer rightly reminds us that many of Blake's so-called 'Christian' utterances occur before 1799, and many of his critiques of Christianity (e.g., The Everlasting Gospel) after.[28] Hence one must be careful in ascribing undue biographical importance to this element.

Third, Blake's Christianity must be interpreted in a very idiosyncratic sense. Jesus is considered as a paradigm of forgiveness in The Four Zoas; and since this motif occurs throughout Nights VIII and IX as well as at the ending of VIIA, it is more reasonable to conclude that it is reached through the narrative rather than forced upon it.

Furthermore, though Night IX owes many resonances to the Book of Revelation, it is definitely not a specific Christian Apocalypse.[29] Indeed the Second

[28] Blake's Humanism (N. Y., 1968), p. 6.

[29] A major failure to perceive The Four Zoas as a coherent whole results from misreading Night IX as a literal Christian Apocalypse rather than a symbolic and epistemological renovation. Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, in Blake's Human Form Divine (1974), may serve as an example: "In The Four Zoas manuscript as we have it,

Blake does not always disentangle his earlier insistence on spiritual renovation only through death and a universal Last Judgment (in Vala) from his later idea of a spiritual regeneration on earth through imaginative vision. Consequently, the final manuscript is often contradictory or confused" (206). The manuscript seems contradictory only because of this critical assumption, as my reading of Night IX shall indicate.

Coming of Christ is barely mentioned in three lines (123.27-9). The appearance of a communal resurrection is misleading, for actually only one man--Albion, the Eternal Man--wakes, slowly undergoing an epistemological and interpersonal renovation, and it is this renovation which causes the old universe to explode--i.e., his mistaken perceptions of the universe. As his senses are revitalized through each Zoa and Emanation becoming purified and integrated back into his central unity, the phenomenal world is also revitalized as a direct result. As Blake states more explicitly in A Vision of the Last Judgment, "Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual" (84). As far as the rest of humanity is concerned, it continues suffering throughout the Apocalypse: this is precisely why all the Zoas group together at the coda to prepare for further "intellectual War" (139.9).

Neither does Blake's Apocalypse renounce the body in favour of an immortal soul, as does St. John

the Divine's. Frosch states, "Blake's concept of the resurrection must be clearly distinguished from that understood by Pauline Christianity. The Body of Clay, which is to be consumed, is the body as it is perceived naturalistically."[30] In fact this naturalistic or spectrous body is consumed by fire or rent by various methods time and again, for death per se is impossible in the dream-framework of the poem. These multiple deaths followed by reanimation are but a continuation of Los and Enitharmon's labour in Night VIII, and thus link with the preceding Nights, strengthening Los' position at the beginning of the Apocalypse when he removes the false temporal sun and moon.

Fourth and last, it is necessary to remember that The Four Zoas occurs explicitly within a dream. As I have already mentioned in another context, this dream does not end until the colophon, "End of the Dream," and therefore the Apocalypse is in one sense mimetic, having no actual historical validity except within one specific dreamer's mind and body. Sid Gershgoren's comprehensive survey of apocalyptic literature in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries points out:

> It is true that despite the revolutionary nature of apocalyptic movements, the Apocalypse still does not arrive. Apocalypses are a

[30] Op. cit., p. 25-6.

> testimony to faith rather than to reason. And because of this, their most important characteristic, their basic literary reliance on the recreation of reality through imagery, must function as the widest possible source of the recreation of struggle, for the apocalyptist, despite his emphasis on final harmony, sees reality in terms of absolute conflict.[31]

We see such a struggle occurring again in Blake's last two epics. But to term his reliance upon the positive dimensions of dream-vision, faith, and mimesis through art merely wish-fulfillment, as do Frye, Bentley and many others, is altogether too myopic.

A much needed Night-by-Night exegesis of The Four Zoas is finally provided by Harold Bloom in Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument.[32] Combined with his later textual commentary for Erdman,[33] a rather more lucid narrative emerges than had previously been traced. Bloom regards the poem as "the most fully articulated myth ever invented by a single imagination"

[31] "Millennarian and Apocalyptic Literature from Thomas Burnet to William Blake," Diss. Univ. of Calif. 1969, pp. 56-7.

[32] New York, 1963.

[33] Op. cit., pp. 864-886.

(185), and praises its "imaginative coherence" (192: like Margoliouth) despite sequential variants. Its theme is seen to be a series of dialectical encounters within a single psyche; hence translation into explicit allegory, Bloom warns, may easily become a distortion. Bloom follows Damon, Murry and Frye in regarding Night VIIA as the poem's crux. Until here, the poem deliberately lacks a hero, "for in fallen worlds where all action is equivocal, no hero can exist" (246). Night IX itself is regarded as "Blake's most exuberant and inventive poetry, probably the most energetic and awesome in the language" (266). But Bloom follows Frye in regards to its inexplicable emergence within such a tortured context. Blake abandoned his poem "because it explained, too well and in too many ways, how the world reached the darkness of his own times, but explained hardly at all what that darkness was, and how it was to be enlightened"(284).

My own reading of the poem will disagree with this view, arguing that Blake's articulation of the Fall itself provides the impetus for its resolution. Not only did Blake explain the darkness of his Nights; the precision of his analysis implicitly contains the Apocalypse. By knowing what is wrong with man, man's correct function may be deduced.

John Beer closely examines the poem's narrative in Blake's Visionary Universe.[34] "To read The Four Zoas now is like walking through an ancient city which has seen several civilizations" (114). A positive progression toward Apocalypse is traced on various levels of motif, but considered finally inadequate due to the structural difficulty of presenting a simultaneous fourfold Fall and gearing the middle Nights, with their necessarily bleak landscape, to the Apocalypse. Beer emphasizes the phallic nature of particularly the illustrations: "They fill out the significance of the text, making it clear that the apocalypse towards which the poem is moving is not a Last Judgment at the end of time, but a self-realization available to man at every moment" (112). However, Beer seems to forget here that the basic tone of the manuscript illustrations is one of sexual despair, not self-realization. The Zoas try to prematurely induce an Apocalypse through fallen sex, but fail; one of the main objectives of the poem is to discover precisely what an unfallen sexuality implies.

Beer asserts that the manner in which the Zoas

[34] Manchester, 1969.

gradually piece together the accounts of their respective falls as a central phallic lapse provides the basic structure of the poem:

> The Four Zoas becomes a mystery story, in which each of the main four characters is aware of a sinister act (which he suspects to have been a crime of some sort) and looks for the culprit. Their search gives the plot some of its force.
> (148)

The final clue slips into place only with Apocalypse, reinterpreting the entire fabric of the preceding poem:

> It shows that the struggle between the Zoas was part of a mistaken reading of experience. There had in fact been no crime, no criminal, rather a failure of the full visionary and phallic consciousness pictured in the simple image of the Eternal Man bowing his head in the noonday heat.
> (157-58)

Beer concludes that the basic structure of the poem is allegorical, its plot a mystery-drama, and that the visionary dimension contained explicitly in the revisions is implicit within the original poem in the sense that the Zoas are ultimately internalized, semi-illusory beings within Albion. But this can only be known when Albion wakes. When he does, a defect of the original poem becomes apparent in that he possesses no sustaining context; hence Blake added the Council of God additions, among others. Beer sees the two levels of The Four Zoas, then, as an "inner myth" (158) of Eternity which interacts with, not displaces, the outer temporal struggles of the fallen Zoas. This

view is a much needed corrective and is unusual in criticism in that it regards one of the poem's presumed major flaws as instead a subtle, deliberate and organic strength.

Morton D. Paley regards the formation of four principle Zoas as a version of medieval and Renaissance psychology, in which man is constituted of various "faculties" mirroring the political and spiritual macrocosm.[35] If any single faculty becomes imbalanced or rebels, the mind--and by extension, the kingdom/cosmos--suffers an insurrection. Paley identifies the genre of The Four Zoas as psychomachia, similar to the Faerie Queene where the knights' quest for their abducted ladies is analogous to the Zoas' search for their Emanations.[36]

Paley sees the poem breaking down through Blake's

[35] Energy and the Imagination: A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought (Oxford, 1970), p. 94.

[36] Paley might have added that the insurrection of psychological faculties or humours also occurs in Chaucer's The Boke of the Duchesse and Milton's Paradise Lost (Satan's revolt in Heaven is parallel to Eve's dream of her temptation, and Adam and Eve's subsequent revolt). Both these works, I shall argue, influenced The Four Zoas. See especially pp. 96-8, 208-9.

disillusionment with the French Revolution, evidenced by the increasing degeneration of Orc, where the ingrowth of his chain in Night V symbolizes energy eventually repressing itself. By making Orc an incarnation of Luvah, whom Blake specifies as one of the prime instigators of the Fall, his meaning is negatively changed even before he is born.[37] In the Lambeth books, Apocalypse occurs within history; in The Four Zoas, it destroys history (165ff.). Unfortunately for the poem this ideological change occurred while Blake was composing it, and his revisions are regarded by Paley as re-evaluations of what he had already written, from the perspective of "the politics of eternity" (102). Consequently, Paley insists, "no interpretation of Vala can hope to be wholly consistent; what we can do is attempt to account for the poem's inconsistencies." Paley's arguments are partly based on the textual findings of Margoliouth and Bentley, which have since proved to be far more hypothetical than they first

[37]Murry (op. cit., p. 176) made this point before Paley. But surely this is to ignore Blake's ambivalence toward Orc even in his first emergence in 'A Song of Liberty' and America. The tactical question is not whether Orc contains daemonic qualities combined with his vibrant sexual and revolutionary energy, but whether his over-exuberance and egotism can be transmuted into a viable political and epistemological renovation. Orc is regenerated at the ending of Night VIIA (90.29-32, 46-53), and plays a positive function in Night IX through his mental fire. Thus I conclude that though Orc is not responsible for the Apocalypse as Frye asserts, neither is he rejected as Paley maintains, but rather becomes purified.

appeared. He reiterates what by now is a common refrain: "The regeneration theme does not grow out of Vala but is superimposed on it, as Blake himself must eventually have realized" (161).

In other words, rather than attribute the cause of the manuscript's collapse to an extranarrative Christian conversion, Paley points the blame to a political change in Blake. In both cases, my rebuttal is that these transformations are reached through Vala's own narrative and imagery, not appended from outside. Furthermore, Paley is surely incorrect in his emphasis upon the original poem's surge toward a political solution. Rather its impetus is deeply introspective, and the final Apocalypse is not primarily a political revolution, but epistemological.

By far the most provocative analysis of The Four Zoas, to my mind, is Helen T. McNeil's "The Formal Art of The Four Zoas."[38] Her condensed essay brilliantly reverses previous criticism and is unique in that it bases its methodology on what, after all, should be

[38] Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, ed. Erdman & Grant (Princeton, 1970), pp. 373-390.

the first principle of literary criticism: a close reading of the poem as an autonomous form with its own distinctive rhythms and principles, no matter how alien these might at first appear:

> Many of the poem's oblique references are explained in Milton and Jerusalem, so that The Four Zoas seems to be dependent on the two other works for context. Since, however, the present version of The Four Zoas is a deliberate one and the matter of the poem is Blake's central myth, rather than an ancillary tale, the poem's confident lack of reference must be taken seriously.
> (378-9)

McNeil rejects Paley's theory of explicit psychomachia in favour of a deliberate absence of referential and expository meaning. Instead the poem "operates without a context, even a Blakean one" (374), forcing the reader into "operational definitions which absorb our previous notions about the psyche" (374). "An epic of situations" results, "in which action has been reduced to a series of violent, absolute confrontations taking place in a cosmic limbo" (373). The Zoas are seen then not as allegorical, human or godlike, but fluid powers continually undergoing redefinition by their context which changes according to their mutilated desires, for will becomes synonymous with action. A floating world results, in which "the real becomes the plausible, whatever is accepted as believable at any point in the poem" (383). Nor does a linear narrative exist until Night VIII. The Fall

occurs instantly, and though the tragic dilemma of language forces words into linear sequence, Blake deliberately uses a variety of technical devices, including repetition, variation, participial construction, biblical parataxis and logical dislocation to force action "into a kind of continual present. The reader is overwhelmed by a spate of actions all in the process of occurring, but he is rarely relieved by their completion" (386). All these characteristics, McNeil concludes, represent such a radical esthetic form profound implications result:

> The Four Zoas' independence of form amounts to the creation of an internally consistent but externally unexplained world. A creation of this sort, even if Blake did not carry it beyond manuscript stage, has tremendous formal implications. It bluntly abandons the associative obligations of major poetry, and by so doing threatens the mimetic mode itself. Such a threat, if carried through, could return poetry to a pre-Homeric primitivism, or, more hopefully, it could give a literary form to any phenomenology which, like Blake's, sees the perceiver and the perceived as one. (379)

McNeil views Blake's revisions as a similar "series of formal dislocations" (375) allowing irony, simultaneity and a mergence of subject with object. It is surprising that hardly any critic except McNeil interprets Blake's 'upper' level of Beulah and Eternity as ironic, since so much of present Blake criticism emphasizes this

facet.[39] For her, the Eternals are at best merely perfunctory, "a parody of causality in a world that seems quite capable of functioning without it" (381). The positive value of this interpretation is that it re-orientates the poem's major arena back within the original post-lapsarian Nights. The negative, however, is that it denies detailed correlations of each glimpse of the Eternal level with both sides of the Vala text into which it is interpolated, and the fact that the revisions correspond to internal solutions reached in previous Nights. To term these merely ironic is to undercut the importance of regenerative motifs throughout the poem, as well as of the final Apocalypse. It is noteworthy that McNeil does precisely this. She gives a précis of narrative events which would seem to advance toward the Apocalypse, including the germane observation that by Night VIIA the characters are genuinely conversing with and listening to each other rather than ranting. But these promising signs, she maintains, are swallowed up by the general despair, and she too ends by questioning the validity of Night IX: "For most of the poem the end is invisible, and when

[39] David Wagenknecht, Blake's Night: William Blake and the Idea of Pastoral (Harvard, 1973), is an exception. He maintains that the orthodox-seeming terminology of the revisions signals Blake's identification of the traditional Crucifixion and Atonement with the circular sterility of the Orc cycle (p. 381).

the apocalypse does draw near, it is as much because of exhaustion as because of actual reformation" (383).

McNeil's major argument, that one's initial confusion at confronting the poem is an intrinsic and deliberate structural characteristic of that poem, is so obvious one wonders why it has never been emphasized by any other critic. Partially this seeming absence of referential meaning is caused by the private nature of the original manuscript, which (with the possible exception of Tiriel) is the least polemical of Blake's works. This is the great value of the poem, for it reveals Blake struggling with himself in two major senses: first, to discover an authentic solution to man's suffering, to the disintegration of his psyche; and second, to evolve an esthetically successful epic form.

But McNeil exaggerates her valid point here, for The Four Zoas does possess a referential context. Its literary context is substantially present, as my next two chapters will explore in detail. The Four Zoas deliberately takes as its outer structure Young's Night Thoughts; contains massive allusions to, criticisms of and restructurings after Paradise Lost; utilizes the imagery and concern of the Graveyard School, poets such as Blair and Hervey; and inserts itself within the dream-vision genre of the Roman de la Rose,

Chaucer's The Boke of the Duchesse and The Hous of Fame, Langland's Piers Plowman and Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress. Finally, its major literary influence, evident on every page, is of course the King James Version.[40] If one ignores these subsumations within the fabric of the poem, as practically all critics have, much of its narrative meaning as well as historical literary significance is lost.[41]

Finally, it is manifestly false that the poem cannot be translated in a credible and internally consistent way into psychological symbols. Every page contains immediate relevance to the reader's 'ordinary' life. The only full length study of the poem published to date, Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson's Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream, repeatedly proves this with its many detailed expositions of how the narrative action reverberates on a subjective level. McNeil is correct to stress the poem's sense of alienness,

[40] Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson, Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream (1978), p. 222, are entirely accurate to emphasize Night IX's "way of echoing and fusing interrelated archetypal and biblical metaphors, resulting in a texture so dense that a discussion of the biblical parallels is impossible."

[41] Bentley, for example, in his long study of The Four Zoas (op. cit., p. 176, n.) states that he is able to find only one "clear echo from another poet" in the entire poem--an astonishing blindness.

but it is Blake's point that the seemingly inhuman and terrifying struggles of his personae are la condition humaine. The Four Zoas achieves full relevance only after repeated readings, when the complex narrative gradually interlinks; only at this point can allegorical connotations slowly accrue.

Thomas A. Vogler, in Preludes to Vision: the Epic Venture in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Hart Crane, also regards Night IX as deficient:

> As epic statement, the conclusion . . .lacks the didactic power of the epic tradition and of Blake's own concept of the poet as prophet; it is a 'visionary' statement in something like the popular derogatory sense of the word. The poet asserts the reality of the conclusion, but there is no satisfactory connection established between its reality and the reality we think we know.[42]

Realizing this failure, Vogler posits, Blake turned from an abstracted Apocalypse to a more subjective version in the revised ending to Night VIIA. Though barely discernible, this thematic shift realizes itself more fully in the autobiographical Milton, where Blake's union with Milton, precipitating a fully embodied epic

[42] Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1971.

vocation, is equivalent to Los' union with his Spectre and his consequent authentic commitment in Night VIIA. The true generic Apocalypse, then, is not Night IX but rather VIIA, which is seen as "not a failure so much as a beginning attempt" (38).

Vogler's analysis is fundamentally the same as Murry's. But he does draw a fascinating parallel between the culminating visions of Night IX, Wordsworth's Book 13 of The Prelude (the ascent of Mt. Snowdon), and the concluding 'Atlantis' of Crane's The Bridge:

> In all three of these sections, we find a final attempt to deny all preceding ambiguities, to achieve a moment of vision so intense and inclusive that it will recover the progressive loss of confidence and control in the earlier part of the poem. (87)

Vogler points out that the denouements of these three works were intuited in the early stages of composition: Wordsworth recounts an early visionary experience, Crane actually wrote his final section first, and an early prototype of Night IX was part of the original Vala. In all three cases the antecedent poem leading to a pre-existing illumination is regarded by Vogler as a doomed rear-guard action to try to wed vision with quotidian existence. He concludes:

> While there is no deceit in such attempts, nothing that could be called a failure of poetic honesty, it is all too easy to accept the affirmative aspect of such an attempt, and to miss or ignore the equivocal elements. (87)

Though Vogler does not mention it, his thesis would seem to be supported by the structure of Young's Night Thoughts, nine Nights ending in Apocalypse, which Blake took as a model. On these grounds it seems certain that Blake always anticipated his final Night would be an Apocalypse. But rather than disrupt narrative continuity, this intimates that the former Nights were always struggling toward their resolution. Blake could have arrived suddenly at Night IX and discovered he had not adequately prepared for it; but it is more reasonable to assume that he carefully structured the previous Nights toward the light of his denouement, since he always knew that it would exist.

Furthermore, may there not be some risk in attributing significance to the chronological sequence of a poem in terms of when it was written rather than its final structural sequence, regardless of initial formation? It is a common phenomenon that the various parts of a poem may occur to a writer at different stages; the ending is sometimes intuited or actually written before the rest of the poem. Yet these parts achieve their authentic validity within the rhythm and proportion of the final poem. Blake's composition of The Four Zoas, in fact, is a direct reflection of its theme: the Apocalypse always existed as its natural summation in his mind, and therefore it is

a constant presence available to the fallen personae throughout the poem, as my reading shall argue--both in the post-Vala revisions, which explicitly present this, and more importantly in the fused or buried images which slowly become revealed as the identical apocalyptic agents as those in Night IX.

Thomas R. Frosch phenomenologically investigates the Fall and Resurrection of the body in Blake.[43] His analysis of the Fall as a distortion of the senses is pertinent: "Blake believes that the human body changes, that it has a history, as rich and specific as the history of thought" (19), which in Blake's own time became an adaptation of the empiricism of Bacon and Locke. Frosch sees fallen man in The Four Zoas as possessing the microcosmic potential for the reversal of the Fall, if his senses are renovated through Los' artistic power. His analysis of Night IX is particularly illuminating, describing the epistemological renovation of each Zoa in rich detail which previous critics had neglected in their assumption that the Last Judgment

[43] The Awakening of Albion: The Renovation of the Body in the Poetry of William Blake (1974).

was meant by Blake in either a literal or historically symbolic sense. However, Frosch neglects to emphasize that not only is the Apocalypse a perceptual renewal, it is also interpersonal: each Zoa must come to terms with his Emanation, and only at this stage can further purification of the senses continue. Again, Frosch's analysis of the complete naturalistic quality of the Apocalypse breaks down when he considers precisely what Blake meant by a clarification and synesthesia of the senses--i.e., how it is possible for man to achieve this ideal in other than a merely symbolic or abstract sense.

Frosch views Blake's auditory style, depending upon the ear as the least fallen of the senses (the "auricular nerves" [I.4.1-3] which Los plants in the proem), as explaining the poem's sense of disorientation: its "field of unframed and ungrounded inter-relations is the space evoked by myth, dream, and religious vision, in which the figures and events seem free-floating in some other world than our own--i.e., another than that of the eye" (113). Hence one must read <u>The Four Zoas</u> primarily with the ear. Frosch clarifies this process in the following important passage:

> Blake's technique of the dramatic voice reaches its most sophisticated development in the epics, and perhaps especially in <u>The Four Zoas</u>. In this poem, we are given

> no consistent authorial voice to serve as a norm by which to gauge the dramatic speakers. We are thrown in among a series of speeches by characters who compete for our sympathies by the force and beauty of their utterances, each trying to persuade us that only he or she is correct in his interpretations, assumptions, and programs. Action and landscape are filtered through their viewpoints, and events are given to us in multiple conflicting versions . . . By juxtaposing these viewpoints against one another and by surrounding the dramatic speeches with images of blindness, fancy, and delusion, Blake shows the inadequacy of any one of the perspectives . . . Blake satirizes perspectivism itself.
> (115-16)

Surely this also describes the failure of most criticism of the poem. Trying to read it with our analytical eye, we fail to realize that the entire fabric of the poem is upheld by the dream-perspectives of each fallen Zoa; and in this manner we are seduced into believing the poem to be inconclusive.[44] Frosch maintains that through Blake's blending of illustration with verse, "the reader, merely through the act of reading, is invited to participate in the warfare of eye and ear" (122).

I might add that The Four Zoas is the extreme embodiment of the esthetic principle that theme, style and structure are synonymous. The poem portrays a rupture of communication, the simultaneous co-existence

[44] I shall argue that Blake's use of dramatic voice was influenced by Paradise Lost. See pp. 210-16.

of disparate worlds carried to such an extent that the poem seems on the surface to be itself a rupture of communication. Nowhere else in English literature has this synthesis been achieved to such a radical degree. The following description of Gothic architecture by Arnold Hauser is illuminating when applied to the manuscript of The Four Zoas:

> A Gothic church . . . seems to be in the process of development, as if it were rising up before our very eyes; it expresses a process, not a result. . . . So it comes about that the effect of such a building is not merely not impaired when it is left uncompleted; its appeal and its power is actually increased. The inconclusiveness of the forms, which is characteristic of every dynamic style, gives emphasis to one's impression of endless, restless movement for which any stationary equilibrium is merely provisional.[45]

To conclude this survey of criticism, a few other works should be mentioned. Erdman's detailed annotations in The Poems of William Blake prove helpful, especially in identifying biblical sources and sorting out the most probable sequences of Nights I and VIII.[46] His

[45] The Social History of Art (1951), I, 220.

[46] ed. Stevenson (1971).

résumé of each Night aids the reader to understand the overall structure of this difficult poem.

However, Erdman's annotations often take up more space than does Blake's text and tend to deter/from the reader/ the kind of visceral, intuitive reading recommended by Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson.[47] Wilkie and Johnson rightly assert that The Four Zoas "is one of the most encyclopedic works of the last three centuries" (vii), requiring a minute exegetical reading which prior to their own book is lacking. The most important feature to emerge from their thoughtful study of the poem is that the motif of regeneration extends throughout all the Nights, through a "method of delayed resolution" (11) whereby the images of the first eight Nights only become clear in the final Apocalypse:

> In the end we shall be able to see that psychic disintegration and reintegration have proceeded with as much intricate clarity of purpose as the disassembly and reassembly work of a watch repair shop.
> (11)

Wilkie and Johnson's analysis of how the structure of each Night fits precisely into a regenerative pattern is most provocative, though it had been hinted at in

[47] Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream (1978). I should mention here that Wilkie and Johnson's book was published after my own reading of the poem was written, though I have incorporated their research where appropriate in footnotes. My own interpretation is not affected by theirs, and shares several parallels as well as differences.

Damon's first break-down of the plot.[48] Alone among all critics they detect a comic tone in the poem, particularly in Urizen's posturings as Jehovah: "The Four Zoas is comedy, commedia in the best sense, in that it rises from a seemingly real hell to a truly real heaven" (235). However, though the sub-title of their book is The Design of a Dream, they barely touch on this dimension, and do not detect Blake's indebtedness to and explicit modelings upon the dream-vision poem, which my next chapter shall rectify.

Finally, an important point is made by Ronald L. Grimmes, in "Time and Space in Blake's Major Prophecies."[49] Grimmes argues that the abruptness of Night IX's Apocalypse is a deliberate space interjected between history and eschaton, as in the sense of a miracle. The Apocalypse must arrive through a total absence of causality. He goes on to state that Jerusalem is more successful in this regard because its Apocalypse occurs spontaneously, whereas Los initiates Night IX.

I agree with Grimmes' thesis, with one crucial

[48] See esp. pp. 38-9, 64, 81-2, 11-12, 114, 116, 139, 207. For Damon, see William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols, pp. 155-56ff.

[49] Blake's Sublime Allegory, ed. Stuart Curran & Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (1973), pp. 59-81, esp. pp. 64-5, 74.

provision: the absence of causality which constitutes the Apocalypse itself can only be arrived at, to the fallen Zoas' perceptions, through causality, a careful and modulated program of regeneration which prepares them to see that their fallen state is in fact a dream. Most critics charge that Night IX is unprepared for in terms of prior character development and motivation. But we shall see in our reading of Night IX that this is precisely Blake's point: the monomaniac and imperialistic struggles of the Zoas to achieve power can only be resolved when they abandon these goals, allowing the inherent unity which is Albion to permeate them. The Apocalypse seems too simple to most critics because it is absurdly simple, though this absolute restructuring of existence can only be achieved through repeated suffering and a sifting of alternatives.

The consensus of critical opinion is that The Four Zoas is a magnificent failure. Only one work (Wilkie and Johnson's recent study) regards it as possessing that deep internal coherence which we expect to find within any literary masterpiece from The Epic of Gilgamesh to Finnegan's Wake. Various negative explanations are offered for its structural incompletion: (1) Blake was incapable of evolving

any coherent larger poetic form whatsoever. But this denies unity to his later two epics, and it is significant that many critical objections to The Four Zoas are undercut by their disparagement of the Prophetic Books as a whole, or by inability to read any of the epics as autonomous poems. (2) Blake's increasing interest in mythology gradually strangled his lyric gift. Surely this is misguided if one considers the contemporary 'Pickering MS,' as well as the many marvelous lyrics in The Four Zoas. Furthermore, the short lyric is not necessarily a diminution of intellectual content; one need only cite 'A Mental Traveller,' which contains the entire fallen cycle of The Four Zoas in compressed lyrics. (3) Blake's inability to leave the poem alone caused it to overflow hopelessly with revisions, until he finally abandoned it to serve as a quarry for the later epics. This disregards the fact that cross-fertilization of borrowed passages occurs both ways. Also the poem is not revised totally but only to a certain degree, at which point Blake retained it to his death. As the poem seems to me perfectly coherent as it now stands, I conclude that Blake did not choose to revise it any further but accepted it as complete in manuscript form, for reasons we shall explore later. (4) Blake's disillusion with the French Revolution part way through composition caused Orc's positive

function in the poem to mutate, initiating structural collapse. And (5) Blake underwent a conversion, his subsequent revisions of Christian tenor destroying whatever unity the original pagan poem may have had.

Damon and Frye gradually changed this "critical ataxy" (to turn Sloss and Wallis' accusation upon themselves), and The Four Zoas has gradually become more accepted on its own terms as a radical (even for Blake) experimental poem which, somehow, never quite made it into a final form. Positive explanations advanced for its apparent lack of coherence include: (1) its dream-structure; (2) Blake's increasing reluctance to fix poetry into rigid allegory; and (3) the difficulty of expressing historical and psychological dimensions at the same time. Yet primarily, I suspect, because Blake never gave his poem a final illuminated form, critics have drawn the untenable assumption that he regarded its transformation from Vala to The Four Zoas as a failure, and they have followed suit presumably on authorial grounds.

The view that The Four Zoas cannot be read in the customary exegetical way since it is a priori textually incomplete might be objected to in three broad areas:

(1) The supposition that Blake definitively relief etched or engraved any finalized poem, thus forming

a canon. But Blake did not relief etch or engrave Poetical Sketches, An Island in the Moon, Tiriel, The French Revolution, and several score of lyrics, including the 'Pickering MS,' poems in the Notebook and in several of his letters, and The Everlasting Gospel. Yet, with the exception of An Island, we regard these as self-sufficient works. Furthermore, it is debatable whether one should trust an author's own judgement of his individual work or wholly assume that we discern his intentions. Kafka, we remember, ordered his writing destroyed at his death; Emily Dickinson published only one poem in her lifetime. Many authors have disparaged certain of their works which later have proved to be consummate masterpieces, whereas they have praised other works which have proved to be negligible.

(2) It is obvious from even a cursory study of Blake's epics that they cannot be read as strictly linear narratives, nor does causality operate in the conventional sense. Particularly, this applies to The Four Zoas with its dream-imagery contained within an intra-psychic framework of Albion's sleeping mind and body. It is but necessary to observe at this point that the disjunctive narrative which frustrates so many readers is in fact intrinsic to the poem, and we must revise, instead, our normal reading and critical procedures.

(3) If the poem is structurally incomplete, one might still regard that as a positive fecundity, in, say, the same sense as Schubert's 5th Symphony ('the Unfinished'), the Rondanini Pieta which Michelangelo left rough-hewn at his death, and the incomplete Gothic churches to which Arnold Hummer refers. That is, its greatness lies in the antinomies which it articulates in the first place and then attempts to coalesce. In this sense, The Four Zoas may reveal more of Blake's inner creative process than do the illuminated books.

The Apocalypse of Night IX is uniformly praised as containing some of the best poetry ever written, but criticized as being unconnected to the rest of the poem. Reasons given for its inexplicable presence include: (1) wish-fulfillment; (2) an irrational resurgence of Orc's old vitality; (3) exhaustion of all the personae and presumably the author; (4) desperation at not finding a solution in the first eight Nights; and (5) adherence to merely formal considerations of needing to end in an Apocalypse. Though a few attempts have been made to trace regenerative motifs through the poem, notably by Bloom, Beer, and Wilkie and Johnson, these are usually regarded as finally incomplete.

But considering that so many critics acknowledge Night IX as superb poetry, it is puzzling why they do

not identify it as the original thematic and structural breakthrough, rather than the short revised ending of Night VIIA. I suggest that misinterpretation of Night IX is caused by a failure to accurately read the previous Nights, where the Fall contains the seeds of the Apocalypse. Naturally the regenerative complexity of Night IX remains unrecognized if one does not see that it correlates with and resolves the previous Nights. If, indeed, Night IX is such a great poetic achievement--and it manifestly is so--then why has it not received deeper study? If it does not fit organically into the poem, then this should but serve as an incentive for reading it as a separate achievement. My analysis of Night IX in Chapter V will act as a corrective to this hiatus.

What is missing in both the negative and positive evaluations of The Four Zoas is a close reading of the poem in its own right. Only McNeil's essay and Wilkie and Johnson's recent book succeed in this respect. My own reading of the poem will be based upon a strictly exegetical methodology. For in what sense can we criticize a poem that completely restructures our conventional terms of reality? The dramatic personae are in one sense strictly illusory. They are multiple figures dissolving into each other or into bestial and inanimate forms; at times "consuming" into the

background matrix, never wholly dying nor achieving authentic existence until the final coda.[50] This occurs in a temporal and spatial field which likewise modulates: infancy and adolescence may coalesce <u>after</u> death, a fully grown being issue from the nostrils of another, ashes reanimate, animals speak, rocks "groan horrible & run about" (IX.118.27), and frost's "pale wife the aged Snow" (IX.138.10) tend the fires of the Apocalypse. Obviously a naturalistic interpretation of these events will fail, and even more obviously Blake never intended his poem to be realistic in this sense. It behooves the critic, therefore, to take the poem on its own merit, somewhat as we must do reading acknowledged surrealistic verse: first examine the narrative to see precisely what is happening on a literal and imagistic level, and only when this is clear can we proceed to further interpretation, e.g., of symbolism. Far too much critical emphasis has been devoted to categorically stating why Blake 'abandoned' his manuscript, without first understanding what his poem says.

Finally, the various critical attempts to discover

[50] For example, Enitharmon contains four major entities within her heart, each emerging only when its outer shell "forgives" it and becomes subsumed within its interior.

an extranarrative cause for Blake's revisions are surely misguided. One does not have to look to a Christian conversion, disillusion with the French Revolution, or the transfer of poetic energy from The Four Zoas to the later two epics to account for the presence of dual levels in the poem. Five alternative explanations which occur within the text could well be responsible for its transformation:

(1) Blake's concept of the contraction and expansion of the senses, which occurs even in the fallen state as the basic perceptual mechanism, is itself a description of what later comes to be revealed and utilized as the level of eternity interacting with the minute particulars of the post-lapsarian text. John Beer is the only critic to recognize this:

> The ability to contract or expand the senses, ascribed to the members of the Council, is in fact the essential element in the quality of Vision, and plays a more profound part in the poem than any piece of mythological machinery. When it is in operation it has the great virtue of working poetically as well as descriptively, so that poetry and action are brought intimately together.[51]

I will cite only one example from the poem to illustrate my own understanding of this principle. In the middle of the despair of Night I, when Enion is repulsed

[51] Blake's Visionary Universe, p. 159.

into Nonentity, suddenly one of Blake's revisionary glimpses into Eternity occurs:

> Then Eno a daughter of Beulah took a Moment
> of Time
> And drew it out to Seven thousand years with
> much care & affliction
> And many tears & in Every year made windows
> into Eden
> She also took an atom of space & opend its centre
> Into Infinitude & ornamented it with wondrous
> art
> (9.9-13)

Eno's activity here (and she is the "Aged Mother" [I.3.1] who sings the entire poem, as the proem states) reflects Blake's own revisions of his earlier Vala: both open "windows into Eden" within the compacted darkness, allowing light to enter. Now this ability to modulate time and space is immediately reciprocated in Blake's text, for the narrative context back in the fallen world continues with a description of the youthful Los and Enitharmon:

> He could controll [sic] the times & seasons,
> & the days & years
> She could controll the spaces, regions, desart,
> flood & forest
> (9.27-8)

But this essentially artistic ability is blocked because of their jealous quarrels. Nevertheless, the stage is set for a further revelation of the Eternal level if they can resolve their differences, as they finally do in Night VIIA.

(2) Blake's revisions not only portray a 'Christian'

interpretation of his poem but more importantly a purified sexual one, where the Daughters of Beulah gradually re-educate the fallen senses to relax their petrified stasis and gain insight into timelessness and a vision of innocent nature. This concept is first expressed by Blake in The Four Zoas, and may originate in his extended treatment of the Garden of Vala in Night IX.[52] In any case, it corresponds to the prior regeneration of the Emanations in the poem, resolving the "Torments of Love & Jealousy" which the sub-title announces as a theme.

(3) Los and Enitharmon's regenerated activity in Night VIII, where they forge and weave esthetic forms for the spectres of all history, portrays Blake's own activity in this poem. Paley suggests that the clothing of spectres throughout this Night is a prototype for Jesus' taking-on of Luvah's robes of blood:[53]

[52] Cf. Andrew Lincoln, "The Revision of the Seventh and Eighth Nights of The Four Zoas," in Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly, 12, No. 2 (Fall 1978), pp. 115-133. Lincoln points out that the Garden of Vala's fallen cycle of nature contrasted with an Eternal one where females are resurrected each spring may have implications for the structure of the entire poem. "This harmonious relationship is the converse of the time-bound cycle, and both cycles suggest that when Blake transcribed IX he was already beginning to devise a structure in which the different levels of vision would be characterized by distinct and antithetical modes of existence" (122).

[53] "The Figure of the Garment in The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem," Blake's Sublime Allegory, ed. Curran & Wittreich, Jr., p. 122.

thus Blake's revisionary level is once again implicit in the former text. Again, two alternating currents occur within Night VIII, increasing in pitch until the final 31 lines of the Apocalypse.[54] Finally, Los' increasing ability to receive and transmit vision throughout the poem gradually forces open the upper level. This is quite the opposite of revisions originating from an extranarrative source to be inflicted upon the poem.

(4) The first major literary influence which The Four Zoas subsumes is the apocalyptic genre, the apokalypsis which traditionally occurs via vision or dream. In this context the first eight Nights must seem inconclusive because they are destroyed in the final Apocalypse along with all other spectrous forms. Just as the Book of Revelation annihilates yet subsumes Old and New Testament history, so Night IX does the same to the previous poem.

(5) The second major literary influence upon The Four Zoas is the dream-vision poem. Inherent within this genre is the presence of two structural levels: the dreamful state and the wakeful one. Sleep implies wakefulness; therefore, since this is Blake's basic

[54] For my analysis of this alternation, see pp. 429-31.

metaphor, the Fall implies the Apocalypse. Since Blake begins his poem with Albion falling into nightmare, it is only natural that he would intend to end with Albion waking. Indeed, though the specific Apocalypse begins abruptly, one must remember that Albion himself wakes slowly, for his presence is intimated throughout the poem (one of the most obvious ways being through flashbacks), and is mentioned explicitly several times--for example, he begins to stir at the start of Night VIII and sneezes, a sign of returning to consciousness. When Albion achieves full wakefulness, regulates his warring parts and marches forth to further intellectual battle, he naturally looks backward upon his dream with lucidity.

The Four Zoas begins with darkness, and ends with light. And just as the Apocalypse implies the total restructuring of the previous poem, in the sense that it interprets it correctly for the first time, so too the dream intuits the outer level of wakefulness when this seems impossible to be discerned. It is not surprising that critics have failed to see the connections between the Fall and the Apocalypse in The Four Zoas, for, according to the poem, critics too exist in a dream-state--in perhaps one of the most terrible of all, Urizen's. One must remember that a major activity of the fallen Zoas is to try to

interpret their cumulative dreams-within-dream, and we are offered many alternative conflicting versions which, I submit, are directly parallel to present critical evaluations of the poem. Particularly relevant in this context are the final two antiphonal summations of the first eight Nights offered by Ahania and Enion at the end of Night VIII, who have experienced the most degrading depths of nightmare on the Margins of Nonentity. Ahania sees only a graveyard vision of existence, with no possible hope or causal linkages to an Apocalypse: "In vain I seek for morning" (108. 22). But for Enion, "hope drowns all my torment . . . I awoke to sleep no more" (109.24.21). These are not mutually exclusive but rather simultaneously valid perspectives of the same central enigma: darkness sheathed within light, and light sheathed within darkness.

III. LITERARY BACKGROUND: DREAM-VISION POETRY

> Hear now my words: If there be a
> prophet among you, I the Lord will
> make myself known unto him in a vision,
> and will speak unto him in a dream.
>
> Numbers xii.6

Blake subtitled The Four Zoas "a DREAM / of Nine Nights," characterizing both the poem and the phenomenal world as the dream of a giant sleeper, Albion, who wakes only in a final Apocalypse which reaches its terminus in the colophon, "End of the Dream." Considering this fact, it is extraordinary that, apart from passing mention, the poem's structural and thematic peculiarities have never been critically examined in the context of either the literary tradition of dream-vision poetry, or the psychological phenomenon of the dream itself. Northrop Frye remarks only that Vala's "lack of explanations, its passionate utterance and its rich suggestive imagery . . . surrounds us with the atmosphere of a dream world as Jerusalem very seldom does."[1] H. M. Margoliouth sharpens Frye's observation by

[1] Fearful Symmetry, p. 270.

enumerating several narrative incidents which seem to have "exactly the technique of the dream,"[2] such as the sudden appearance and disappearance of characters, the nightmarish quality of Night VIIB, and Night IX's obvious borrowings from St. John's Revelation which also utilizes a dream format. Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson's recent study of The Four Zoas points out that the poem is called a dream "not only because it is a visionary work organized according to the logic of dreams, but also because it describes the nightmare of the sleep of death as something from which it is possible to awaken."[3] But no critic takes the matter any further, presumably because such an identification carries the scholar into the 'subjective' field of dream analysis where, of course, the pioneer studies of Freud, Jung and Stekel drew striking analogies between dreams and literature.[4] It remained for

[2] William Blake's Vala, p. xvi.

[3] William Blake's Four Zoas, p. 199.

[4] The present chapter is concerned with how the historical literary tradition of the dream-vision influenced The Four Zoas; it does not attempt to investigate the relationship of the dream as a psychological phenomenon with Blake's poem. The reason for this is twofold: Blake works primarily within the dream-vision format, and thus we should consider his poem within this specific context; and I do not wish to apply a particular school of dream analysis upon the poem, which (though enlightening)

would pervert the singularity of Blake's vision. To be sure, a unique dream phenomenology can be deduced from this poem, but since it seems neither Freudian nor Jungian, it lies outside the scope of my thesis. My contention, however, will be that the classical dream-vision does inculcate certain structural features of the dream; but these will be considered within their literary context.

S. Foster Damon to specify how unique The Four Zoas is as a dream-poem:

> Perhaps Blake's greatest contribution to literary methods occurs in this poem: his invention of the dream technique. . . . Crucial scenes are omitted; others are expanded out of all seeming proportion. But this technique is closest to our deepest mental processes, and it was Blake's ideal--complete freedom of the imagination. . . . Nothing like it had been done in English, to the best of my recollection, since Chaucer's Boke of the Duchesse, or was to be attempted again until Lewis Carroll wrote Sylvie and Bruno.[5]

Damon's final remark is provocative, for it places Blake's epic within at least a vestigial historical continuity. However, it is contradictory, for how could Blake both invent the dream technique as a "literary method" and yet be anticipated by Chaucer? Moreover, upon closer examination the hiatus which Damon finds between Chaucer and Blake in this respect does not exist.

It is the object of the present chapter to assess

[5] A Blake Dictionary, p. 143.

how The Four Zoas belongs to, was influenced by and extended the genre of the dream-vision poem. I shall consider only source material available to and almost certainly read by Blake. My study will include Chaucer, the Roman de la Rose, Langland's Piers Plowman, Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, Milton's Paradise Lost, and continue into the 'Graveyard School' of Blair, Hervey, Gray and finally Young's Night Thoughts, which closely influenced The Four Zoas and indeed formed its outer structure.

(A) CHAUCER

That Blake was familiar with Chaucer long before his The Canterbury Pilgrim's etching (1807) has been recognized from Chaucerian echoes in Poetical Sketches, most notably by Michael Phillips.[6] In A Descriptive Catologue Blake states his familiarity with the whole of Chaucer's work: "But it appears, in all the writings of Chaucer, and particularly in his Canterbury Tales,

[6] "William Blake and the Unincreasable Club," Bulletin of the New York Public Library (Autumn, 1976), pp. 17-18. See also, "Blake's Early Poetry," in William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes, ed. Paley & Phillips (Oxford, 1973), pp. 1-28.

that he was very devout, and paid respect to true enthusiastic superstition" (31-2). The edition of Chaucer which Blake used can be identified with some certainty.[7] Thomas Speght's 1602 edition not only contains Chaucer's four dream-poems--The Boke of the Duchesse, The Hous of Fame, The Parlement of Foules, and the 'Prologue' to the Legend of Good Women--but includes his translation of the Roman de la Rose, the thirteenth-century French work which initiated the medieval tradition of dream-poetry. In addition, Speght included two other dream-poems supposedly by Chaucer which have since proved to be anonymous fifteenth-century works, Chaucer's Dream, a rambling poem of over 2,000 lines modelled after The Hous of Fame, and The Assembly of Ladies. Given Blake's undoubted familiarity with some if not all of this material, plus frequent references to dreams in The Canterbury Tales, an impressive body of dream literature emerges which holds remarkable parallels with The Four Zoas' treatment of dreams, sleep and night.

[7] A Blake Bibliography, ed. G. E. Bentley, Jr., & Martin K. Nurmi (Minneapolis, 1964), p. 202. I have collated the Chaucer quotations which Blake cites in A Descriptive Catologue with Speght's 1602 edition and find these substantially identical, with the exception of a few minutia which can be attributed to Blake's own idiosyncratic punctuation. Blake was careful to preserve Chaucer's orthography, a sign of respect for the "minuteness" (DesC. 12) of Chaucer's verse.

Chaucer's first dream-poem, The Boke of the Duchesse, models itself after the French tradition in that it contains a preface discussing the ambivalence of dreams, the dream itself whose location is a spring garden, a dream-guide (here a puppy!) who leads the Dreamer to a yet deeper sanctum of the dream, personifications, and a return to wakeful consciousness. Ostensibly it is a public eulogy composed for Blanche, the first wife of John of Gaunt, Chaucer's patron. But it develops with delicate skill the theme of sleep/wakefulness in three specific foci: the narrator-Dreamer, who exists in daylight 'reality'; the lady Alcyone of Ovid's Metamorphoses, who exists in mythological art; and the Black Knight, who exists in dream. Each of these episodes seems disconnected on the surface, and indeed is often criticized as such. But Chaucer's unique contribution to the dream-vision tradition is that he deliberately utilizes certain characteristics of the dream as formal poetic techniques.[8] What seems chaotic on the surface becomes, upon closer examination, interrelated on a deeper, primarily imagistic level. The narrator (Chaucer's "I") represents the outer layer of the phenomenal world carried to such an extreme that he suffers from insomnia:

[8] Cf. Constance B. Hieatt, The Realism of Dream-Visions (The Hague, 1967), p. 88, and A. C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry (1976), p. 49.

I have great woonder by this light,
Howe I live, for day ne night
I may nat sleepe welnigh nought.
(227r., Rb. 1-3)[9]

Cut off from natural sleep, the narrator's life has dwindled into a kind of daydream: "Such fantasies ben in mine head" (227r., Rb. 28). His mysterious eight-year "sicknesse" (227v., Rb. 36) is never fully explained--"Passe we over until eft" (Rb. 41); but judging from the three other dream-poems, probably it is caused by failure in love. Whatever the specific reason, it approaches spiritual or existential dimensions: "And drede I have for to dye" (227r., Rb. 24).

An accomplished insomniac, the narrator tries to read himself to sleep through Ovid's Metamorphoses, a book which influenced Chaucer as it did Blake. By relaxing his tense introspective gaze upon his own dilemma through the distancing powers of art, the poem's second focus appears within Ovid's story of Alcyone who loses her husband at sea. Like the narrator, she is unable to sleep, and finally prays:

[9] All Chaucer references, cited within parenthesis in my text, are to Speght's edition, The Workes of ovr Ancient and Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer (1602). In Speght's edition page numbers are given on recto only, with no line numbers. Therefore, citations of text will indicate page number, followed by recto or verso, e.g., 227r. (or) 227v. For convenience, I include the line numbers used in F. N. Robinson's standard edition, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford, 1974), identified by "Rb."

Send me grace to slepe and mete
In my sleepe some certaine sweven,
Where through that I may know even
Whether my lord be quyke or dead.
(227v., Rb. 118-21)

sweven dream

At this point she falls "a swowne, as cold as stone" (Rb. 123). Juno answers her prayer by sending a messenger to waken Morpheus, the god of sleep, in order to re-animate her husband's body so it may appear in a dream. The messenger enters a sterile underworld which further defines both Alcyone's swoon and the narrator's own desperate state:

. . .he came to the darke valley,
That stant betweene rockes twey,
Ther never yet grew corne ne gras,
Ne tree, ne naught that ought was,
Beast ne man, ne nought else. . .
(228r., Rb. 155-59)

Now this is also the dream locus which Chaucer personally encounters in his subsequent dream-poem, The Hous of Fame, when he emerges from the "noblesse of Images" (264r., Rb. 471) in Venus' temple to confront his own wasteland:

Then saw I but a large field,
As farre as ever I might see,
Without toune, house, or tree,
Or bush, or grasse or cared land,
For al the field was but of sand
As small as men may see at eve
In the desart of Lybye;
Ne no manner creature
That is yformed by nature
Ne saw I, me to rede or wisse.
O Christ, thought I, that art in blisse,
From fanton and illusion
Me save!
(264r., Rb. 482-94)

In both instances the absence of vegetation is terrifying because Chaucer's poetic methodology requires an explicit literary tradition to draw upon, as the same metaphor of a field makes clear in his third dream-poem, The Parlement of Foules: "For out of the old fieldes, as men saieth, / Commeth al this new corne from yere to yere" (233v., Rb. 22-3). The dream has become nightmare. It takes little empathy to link these desolate dream landscapes to the charred "desart" recurring throughout The Four Zoas: "There is no City nor Corn-field nor Orchard! all is Rock & Sand" (I.16.5). For Chaucer, each instance forces him to reappraise his poetic stance, which means jettisoning part of the literary past in favour of the everyday world of fourteenth-century England around him. The alternative is to deny the Messenger's call to "Awake anone" (228r., Rb. 181), and sink yet deeper into a cave "under a rocke ygrave . . . as derke / As hell pitte" (Rb. 164, 170-71), where we are given an expanded vision of all existence enveloped by a deadly sleep:

> They had good leyser for to rout,
> To envye who might sleepe best,
> Somme hing her chyn upon hir brest,
> And slept upryght, hir hed ybed,
> And somme lay naked in her bed
> And slept whiles their daies last.
> (228r., Rb. 172-77)

These sleepers represent en extremus/a spiritual living (?)/ death; cut off from the sun, inverting day into night,

they are the logical progression of Alcyone and the narrator's despair if carried to its conclusion.[10] The extremes of insomnia and catatonic trance are thus encountered within the first 170 lines of the poem. Chaucer's task in his sequence of dream-poems is to balance these polarities; either extreme is seen as a "sicknesse." The narrator cannot sleep, hence is severed from the enchanted garden of the dream and its wealth of natural imagery; but if he remains too long asleep, he will be consumed by his own dream. This is precisely what has happened to the above sleepers, and what will happen to Alcyone and the Black Knight. The Messenger cries "Awake!" three times--a call which echoes throughout Chaucer's dream-poems as it does throughout The Four Zoas. When the husband's drowned body is reanimated, significantly he gives Alcyone the same summons, begging her to moderate her sorrow:

> My sweet wife
> Awake, let be your sorrowfull life,
> For in your sorrow there lyth no rede,
> For certes sweet love I am but dede.
> (228r., Rb. 203-06)

But she is unable to endure this stark vision of reality, and awakens only to die.

[10] Chaucer explicitly follows Ovid's account here in the Metamorphosis, Book XI (592-650), where dreams "are indistinguisable from the real shapes they imitate," taking either human, animal or inanimate forms.

The same pattern is repeated most lucidly in the third and longest vignette, the narrator's dream of the Black Knight. Falling asleep on his book--a fitting image for the interconnection between the two episodes--he wakes to the familiar garden of the traditional dream-vision poem. The immediate paradox he encounters is that by dreaming he wakes from his former "feeling in nothing" (227r., Rb. 11) and "heaviness" (Rb. 25) into a reborn world of clarity and colour, reinvigorated perceptions, and a return to activity. For Chaucer, the dream is not escapist but a method of "Regeneration" (to use Blake's term) whereby the Dreamer confronted with a reflection of his own wakeful life is forced to come to terms with some disturbing aspect of his deeper self. Just as Alcyone's dream forces her to acknowledge her husband's death, so Chaucer encounters mortality in his own dream through the figure of the Black Knight. On the surface, the Knight symbolizes John of Gaunt mourning his wife. But his extreme dejection--

> by my trouth
> It was great wonder that nature
> Might suffer any creature
> To have such sorrow, and be not ded
> (229r., Rb. 466-69)

links him with the narrator's condition at the poem's beginning:

> For nature would not suffise
> To none earthly creature,
> Not long time to endure
> Without sleepe and be in sorrow.
> (227r., Rb. 18-21)

The Dreamer is able to diagnose his own malady by confronting it within his dream. This is realistic to a dream setting, where everything which occurs is in some sense autobiographical.

If we turn now to Blake, the Black Knight is remarkably analogous to the "Ancient Man" of The Four Zoas, or Albion as named in later revisions.[11] Both are stricken in an unnaturally dense forest, Blake's vegetative plane of existence: the Knight rests against "an Oke, an huge tree" (229r., Rb. 447), whereas Albion sinks beneath "the Palm tree & the Oak of weeping / Which stand upon the Edge of Beulah" (I.18.11-12). The Knight is separated from the exuberant hunting activities of the mysterious Emperor Octovyen which begin and end the dream proper; Albion is separated from the exuberant mental activities of Eternity whose two main sources are "Hunting and War" (Jer. 2.38.31). The Knight is sunk into a deep, almost transic sorrow, battling with his own thoughts and withdrawing from the present into an illusory inner world:

> I went and stood right at his fete,
> And grette hym, but he spake nought,
> But argued with his owne thought. . .
> So, through hys sorrow and hevy thought
> Made him that he heard me nought;
> For he had welnich lost hys mynde.
> (229v., Rb. 502-04, 509-11)

[11] Some of the remarks I make concerning The Four Zoas throughout this chapter may seem slightly arbitrary; they are, however, supported by the detailed textual analysis I make in Chapter V, "A Reading of the Poem," which should be considered in conjunction with this section.

Likewise Albion "sick . . . wanders from his house of Eternity" (I.21.10), at length sinking into a coma from which he does not emerge until Night IX:

> The Eternal Man sleeps in the Earth nor feels
> the vigrous sun . . .
> His eyes sink hollow in his head his flesh
> coverd with slime
> And shrunk up to the bones alas that Man
> should come to this
> His strong bones beat with snows & hid within
> the caves of night
> Marrowless bloodless falling into dust
> (VIII.108.23, 30-33)

The Black Knight defines his "paine" as "Alway dying and be not deed" (229v., Rb. 588), and utters the following lament:

> My song is tourned to plaining,
> And all my laughter to weeping,
> My glad thoughts to heavinesse,
> In travaile is mine idleness,
> And eke my rest, my wele is wo,
> My good is harme, and evermo
> In wrath is tourned my playing,
> And my delite into sorrowing.
> Mine heale is tourned into sicknesse. . .
> (230r., Rb. 599-607)

Albion too lives in an inverted world:

> My robe is turned to confusion & my bright
> gold to stones . . .
> The Corn is turned to thistles & the apples
> into poison
> The birds of song to murderous crows My joys
> to bitter groans
> The voices of children in my tents to cries
> of helpless infants
> (IX.119.39-120.3)

Chaucer describes the Black Knight's sickness in terms of medieval physiology as an imbalance of the four humours:

> The blood was fled for pure dread
> Downe to hys hart, to maken him warme,
> For well it feeled the heart had harme. . .
> For it is member principall
> Of the body, and that made all
> His hew chaunge and waxe greene
> And pale, for ther no blood is seene
> In no manner limme of his.
> (229v., Rb. 490-92, 494-98)

This is parallel to Albion's central Fall, as gradually articulated through flashbacks. The four Zoas, each representing a part of the body and an element as do the medieval humours, suffer an insurrection which begins primarily in the heart.[12] In one version, Ahania has a dream which, like Chaucer's here, suspends historical time in order that the original cause of the Dreamer's sickness may be revealed. Luvah abandons his proper domain of the heart's emotions to usurp Albion, but is evicted:

> And now the Human Blood foamd high I saw
> that Luvah & Vala
> Went down the Human Heart where paradise &
> its joys abounded . . .
> Vala shrunk in like the dark sea that leaves
> its slimy banks
> And from her bosom Luvah fell
> (III.42.10-11, 15-16)

Thus Albion falls into psychosomatic sleep. Like the Black Knight, his limbs become pale from loss of blood. In Chaucer's poem, further cross-examination gradually reveals that the Knight's imbalance of the humours

[12] Cf. Morton D. Paley, Energy and the Imagination, p. 94.

was implicit within his former unquestioning commitment to the conventions of chivalric fine amour, not merely caused by his lady's death. This is consistent with medieval dream theory, which divided dreams into separate categories, each of which could overlap--hence the difficulty in interpretation.[13] A somnium naturale was considered to be of physical origin, reflecting an imbalance of the humours, and thus amenable toward diagnosing the Dreamer's actual illness. For example, a dream containing a predominance of the colour black (i.e., the Black Knight here) symbolizes melancholy. Historically this concept may be traced to the Greeks, as J. B. Stearns, in Studies of the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama, suggests:

> Apparently Greek speculation as early at least as Plato reached the conclusion that the reliability of the dream as a means of divination depended upon the state of the physical organism during sleep; when the body is clogged with food and drink in excess, phantasmagorical dreams result, but temperance produces clear and divine dreams.[14]

That is, the state of health of the central Dreamer is directly reflected within his dream. Blake's image of

[13] For the background of medieval dream psychology, see Hieatt, The Realism of Dream Visions, pp. 27-9, and Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry, pp. 8-11.

[14] Lancaster, Penn., 1927, p. 68.

Albion alludes to this idea: Albion is not, however, a single figure, or even a subjectively composite one such as Chaucer/Alcyone/the Black Knight above, but rather the illness of the entire British nation. Chaucer diagnoses a sickness; Blake both diagnoses and prognoses it, providing (primarily in Night IX) the means for recovery. Yet in both cases, as James Hillman's recent study of dreams asserts, "it is the pathologized image in the dream, the bizarre, peculiar, sick or wounded figure--the disruptive element--to which we must look for the key to the dream work."[15]

The Boke of the Duchesse returns abruptly to the present with the word "dead," and the Dreamer is now in the same situation as Alcyone before, who received a dream of irrevocable mortality. But whereas both Alcyone and the Black Knight are unable to endure their visions, Chaucer proceeds to "Fonde to put this swevin in ryme" (233r., Rb. 1333).

Criticism of conventional romantic love is a major motif of Chaucer's work. Blake's "Sexual Strife" (GP. 47) is presaged particularly in The Canterbury Tales,

[15] The Dream and the Underworld (1979), p. 128.

with its portrayals of jealousy, marriage versus celibacy, man versus woman. We see the same fluctuations of wooing, jealousy, and temporary union followed by alienation in The Four Zoas, whose sub-title announces part of its theme as "The torments of Love & Jealousy." Now sex is also the traditional motif of the courtly dream-vision poem, especially in the seminal Roman de la Rose as translated by Chaucer. A scene here where the god of Love pierces the Dreamer with five arrows is brutally realistic, inflicting considerable strain upon the quixotic quest for the Rose ("O Rose thou art sick").[16] The Dreamer's collapses and revivals are closely akin to Blake's Dreamer:

[16] See Michael Phillips, "William Blake and the 'Unincreasable Club,'" p. 17, n. 38, who considers Blake's "How sweet I roam'd" as epitomizing the dream-vision of Chaucer's Romaunt of the Rose.

Blake surely was aware of the dream-poem's traditional image-cluster of the rose. "The Garden of Love" (SE) with its ruined flowers bound with briars seems to be a direct reference to the dream-garden of the Romaunt of the Rose. Again, compare "My pretty Rose tree" with:

> But thornes sharpe me than ynow
> There were, and also thistles thicke,
> And breres brimme for to pricke,
> That I ne might get grace
> The rough thornes for to pase
> To seene the Roses fresh of hew.
> (117r., Rb. 1834-9)

When I was hurt thus in stound,
I fell downe plat unto the ground,
Mine herte failed and fainted aye,
And longe time in swoune I lay . . .
So nyth I drow to desperaunce,
I roughte of deth ne of lyf,
Wheder that Love wolde me dryf.
(116v., Rb. 1733-36, 1873-75)

One is reminded of Albion stricken by Vala's sexual dreams in the Garden of Beulah, a hortus conclusus which, like those in the Romaunt of the Rose and The Parlement of Foules, contains an ambivalent mixture of joy and decadence. The French dream-poem adapted Genesis' Edenic garden to sanctify romantic love; but the evident painfulness that such a mergence causes to the Dreamer here indicates how the profane qualities excluded outside the garden's walls (such as Envye and Povert) are yet submerged within the dream landscape. To fall in love becomes symbolically equivalent to falling from grace, made explicit by Guillaume de Lorris' eventual banishment from the garden. Blake need not have taken these ideas specifically from Chaucer's translation, of course. But the manuscript illustrations of The Four Zoas repeatedly depict winged Cupids firing arrows into their helpless victims, who react with pain and dismay.[17] The fragile stasis of the dream-garden is easily shattered; both the wounded Dreamer of The Four Zoas and the Romaunt of the Rose

[17] See FZ MS pp. 4, 19, 40, and 108.

fall into disunity, with their humours battling within:

> all day I chaunged hewe
> As men might see in my visage,
> The arrowes were so full of rage,
> So variaunt of diversitee,
> That men in everrich might se
> Both great annoy and eke sweetnesse,
> And joy meint with bitternesse.
> (117v., Rb. 1914-26)

Chaucer's dream-poem most resembling The Four Zoas is not, as Damon indicated, The Boke of the Duchesse, but The Hous of Fame. F. N. Robinson draws attention to its "undeniable independence" and "experimental character,"[18] a characteristic it holds in common with Blake's poem. Like The Four Zoas it was left in an unfinished state, is perhaps the most personal of Chaucer's works, and carries the dream technique further than any other work before Blake except Piers Plowman.

Whereas the rest of Chaucer's dream-poems begin with a wakeful preface which contrasts and interacts with the dream, The Hous of Fame immediately plunges into a dream-world with no authorial explanations to define its content, and indeed with no final withdrawal from the dream. The Dreamer's initial confusion at the alien landscape of gold and glass images--"But

[18] The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 280.

certainly I nist never / Where that it was" (262v., Rb. 128-29)--deepens into terror by Book II. He is not in control, but acted upon by the dream. The poem's structure is that of a journey both inward and upward into progressively more internalized areas, until it culminates in the very "engine" (264v., Rb. 528) of creative energy which originates the dream. This transition begins gradually in Book I with the French convention of surveying frescoes upon the walls of a temple or garden. Structurally this episode corresponds to The Boke of the Duchesse's narrator reading Ovid; but here it occurs within the dream, hence achieves an immediacy which in turn energizes the rest of the poem. Chaucer's rapt but passive description of the Virgilian frescoes permits a panoramic vision to emerge--"First saw I the destruction / Of Troy" (262v., Rb. 131-2)--"And I saw next," etc.; but these scenes exist frozen in emblematic "portraitures" (262v., Rb. 125), and he remains merely a spectator. Overwhelmed, the Dreamer realizes he does not know "ne where I am, ne in what countree" (264r., Rb. 475), consequently steps outside the enchanted temple--an unprecedented development. His quest to discover his location is answered more literally than he could have wished. Immediately he finds himself in the barren field of sand which we have previously noted as analogous to the locale of

The Four Zoas. It stands in contrast to the "noblesse of Images" (264r., Rb. 471) he has just passed through, and symbolizes, I submit, a kind of pure ignorance which turns out to be the necessary preliminary to a threshold of artistic vision. It is terrifying because it seems bereft of artistic and natural creation:

> Ne no manner creature
> That is yformed by nature
> Ne saw I, me to rede or wisse.
> O Christ, thought I, that art in blisse,
> From fanton and illusion
> Me save!
> (264r., Rb. 489-94)

It is precisely these dream phantasma[19] which Blake encounters in The Four Zoas. In the same way as Albion "lifts the blue lamps of his Eyes & cries with heavnly voice" (IX.119.30) in order to awaken, so Chaucer here "with devocion / Mine eyen to the heaven I cast" (264r., Rb. 494-5), and cries out to Christ. Immediately a gigantic golden Eagle descends, in striking contrast to the petrified golden statues previously seen.

At this juncture, with the Dreamer about to be transported by the Eagle (which symbolized genius to

[19] This term refers to nightmarish dream-images, and is a category of dream devised by Macrobius, in Somnium Scipionis (Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, 1472, rpt. N. Y., 1952, ed. & tr. William Harris Stahl, p. 89), the authoritative dream text of the medieval world. Chaucer cites Macrobius in three of his dream-poems. James Winney, in Chaucer's Dream-Poems (1973, p. 31), speculates that this type of dream "seems to offer a close parallel to the state of imaginative excitement in which the poet apprehends, or is given, the matter of his poem." For further discussion of dream phantasma in relation to Piers Plowman and Blake, see pp. 118-19.

classical [e.g., Pindar] and medieval writers as it did for Blake), Chaucer can no longer maintain the first proem's sophisticated suspension of judgement regarding the clairvoyance of dreams, and frankly classifies his vision as Macrobius' oraculum:

> So dredefull a vision,
> That Isay neither Scipion,
> Ne kynge Nabugodonozore,
> Pharao, Turnus, ne Alcanore,
> Ne metten such a dreame as this!
> (264v., Rb. 513-17)

A. C. Spearing notes that in this second proem "Chaucer for the first time, under the impact of his reading of Dante and Boccaccio, indicates the possibilities of this high role for the poet . . . that poetry can be inspired and prophetic."[20] James Winney, too, maintains that here Chaucer is groping toward a concept which medieval terminology lacked, 'imagination' not as memory but rather as the creative powers of the mind in the sense that Coleridge (and, I might add, Blake) use the term.[21] The dream has become an explicit vehicle of discovery. Chaucer's resolve to "tell all my dreame aright" (264v., Rb. 527) constitutes a methodology, for the meticulous accuracy needed to transcribe such a harrowing mental journey requires

[20] Medieval Dream-Poetry, p. 84.

[21] Chaucer's Dream-Poems, p. 31f.

"engine and might" (264v., Rb. 528). In short, the subject matter becomes so extraordinary that it impells an equal intensity of expression approaching Blake's dimensions of prophecy. Whereas Blake continually writes 'downward' from a syncretistic perspective (negative until The Four Zoas, and positive thereafter) toward quotidian human existence and the rough basement of language itself, Chaucer writes 'upward' from a firmly grounded urban, literary and quotidian base toward visionary perspective.

At this point the poem literally takes off. The Eagle carries the Dreamer with tremendous velocity, causing authentic terror only momentarily rescinded throughout the rest of the poem. Its familiar summons to "Awake!" (264v., Rb. 554) carries a dual significance for the Dreamer to emerge from his swoon and to accept the forthcoming heart of the dream not as phantasma but as oracular vision. As interpreter and guide, the Eagle explains that the purpose of the dream is to expand Chaucer's limited poetic horizons which until now have been merely vicarious through books, remaining separate from the pulsating life around him:

> And when thy labour all done is,
> And hast made all thy reckenings
> In stead of rest and of new things,
> Thou goest home to thine house anone,
> And also dombe as a stone,
> Thou sittest at another booke,
> Till fully dased is thy looke,
> And livest thus as an hermite.
> (265r., Rb. 652-59)

The Eagle's flight reveals the basic structure of The Hous of Fame as a series of pictographic 'takes,' each gaining epistemologically in clarity and scope:

> And I adowne gan to loken tho,
> And beheld fields and plaines
> And now hils, and now mountaines,
> Now valeis, and now forests,
> And now unneth great beests . . .
> (226r., Rb. 896-900)

The Dreamer is unable to fit this expanded landscape into his previous parameters defined by books and memory:

> "Seest thou any token,
> Or ought, that in this world of spoken?"
> I said, "Nay."
> (266r., Rb. 911-13)

It is this Nay which allows a readjustment of focus, a further penetration of vision, abandoning the old perspective in favour of a new one, which in turn spontaneously allows the formation of a yet wider and more profound perspective:

> But thus soone in a while hee
> Was flowen fro the ground so hye
> That all the world as to mine eye,
> No more semed than a pricke . . .
> . . .
> "Now tourne upward" (qd. he) "thy face,
> And behold this large place,
> This eyre, but looke that thou ne bee
> Afraid of hem that thou shalt see . . .
> . . .
> "Lo" (qd. he) "cast up thyne eye,
> See yonder lo, the Galaxie,
> The which men clep the Milky Way . . ."
> (266r., Rb. 904-07, 925-28, 935-37)

Finally, gazing backward becomes equal with gazing forward, for all dimensions are centered within the

Dreamer. Chaucer views the "engendrynge" or origins of the natural elements which he as a poet must work with on their symbolic level within language:

> Tho gan I to looke under mee,
> And beheld the eyrish beests,
> Cloudes, mistes, and tempests,
> Snowes, hayles, raynes, and windes,
> And th'engendring in her kindes,
> All the way through which I came:
> O God (qd. I) that made Adame,
> Moch is thy might and nobles!
> (266v., Rb. 964-71)

Book III continues this pattern. The House of Fame replaces the earlier temple of Venus; the historical statues negate the earlier Virgilean frescoes, with the same prophetic "Then saw I" operating with humility, for Chaucer renounces any desire to join the capricious dictates of Fame. The benign but artificial Venus of Book I evolves into Book III's terrifying "femine creature . . . never formed by nature" (268r., Rb. 1365-66), expanding and contracting from a cubit to infinity, covered with eyes and ears, sprouting partridge wings from her feet. These goddesses are certainly analogous to the sexual temples recurrent in The Four Zoas; Chaucer is uneasy at the synthesis of feminine beauty with cruelty, but Blake condemns it. Even the penultimate House of Fame is replaced by its core image, the final whirling House of Rumour formed of twigs like a hive. Book III enacts a kind of apocalyptic Last Judgement upon various classes of humanity;

and Chaucer is at last bequeathed the experiential raw vision of "tidings / Of Loves folke" (265r., Rb. 644-45) which he has been searching:

> And over all the houses angles,
> Is ful of rownings and of jangles
> Of peace, and of labour, of viages,
> Of abode, of death, and of life,
> Of love, of hate, accord, of strife,
> Of loos, of lore, and of wynnings,
> Of heale, of sicknesse, or of lesings . . .
> That is the mother of tidings,
> As the sea of welles and springs,
> And it was shapen lyke a cage.
> (270v., Rb. 1959-66, 1983-85)

The analogies with Blake are impressive. Such stereoscopic vision is most fully developed in The Four Zoas. It is specifically stimulated by its generic setting within a dream-poem. The advantages of this form are obvious: naturalistic definitions no longer apply; allegorical figures and places, conversely, achieve a curiously hybrid versimilitude within the protean mental structure of the dream; and at the farthest spectrum, images need not carry even an implicit symbolic meaning but simply occur, point-blank, as nonlogically (on a surface level) as they do in dreams. In their dream-poems Chaucer and Blake give themselves an artistic freedom which only a science-fiction writer possesses to the same degree. Restrictions or conventions of any sort need not apply, be they literary, logical, cultural or--the ultimate volatile freedom--occasioned by the emerging form of the poem

itself. A dream switches perspectives and personae quite arbitrarily (again on the surface); emphatically it is not bound by Aristotelian--or neoclassical--strictures. This accounts for the progressive bizarreness of Chaucer's imagery in The Hous of Fame. The philosophical and quasi-scientific basis for language given, with considerable humour, by the Eagle in its long discourse on sound in Book II is replaced in Book III by the thing-itself, where sound is wedded to its visual anagogue.

But the differences between the two poets are crucial. Chaucer remains uncertain or outright terrified by his dream, fainting at one point, breaking into "swete" (266v., Rb. 1042) at another. He therefore tries to graft his vision upon traditional literary antecedents in an effort to slow down and control his headlong flight, until the Eagle at one such juncture objects:

> Let be (qd. he) Thy fantasie,
> Wilt thou learne of sterres ought?
> Nay certainly (qd. I) right nought.
> And why? For I am to old.
> (266v., Rb. 992-95)

This is sheer rationalization, as the Eagle recognizes. But when Chaucer refuses to look directly into the light of the stars, the Eagle is forced to concur, rather sadly:

No force (qd. I) it is no need,
I leve as well, so God me speed,
Hem that writen of this matere,
As though I knew her places here;
And eke they semen here so bright,
It should shenden al my sight,
To looke on hem. That may well be
(Qd. he).
(266v., Rb. 1011-18)

The contrast with Blake--and blind Milton--could not be more striking. One is reminded of the terrified Angel in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (pl. 17-20) who is also carried on a celestial journey through the sun and planets by Blake who, taking the role of Chaucer's Eagle, is perfectly at home in the cosmic energies of a dreamlike setting. Chaucer's protest at accepting his own genius in the form of the Eagle is equivalent in Blake's terminology to refusing to embrace his Spectre unto annihilation:

I am neither Enoche, ne Elie,
Ne Romulus, ne Ganimede,
That were bore up as men rede,
To heaven with dan Jupiter,
And made the gods buteler.
(264v., Rb. 588-92)

The Eagle's description of the universe as an interconnected web of sound, and its focusing of history within a single nexus (the House of Rumour), epitomizes the structure of the poem itself. Seemingly chaotic, each section interlinks in a bewildering plenitude, as do the images of a dream. The same apparent lack of order is also present to a far greater

degree in Blake's dream-poem, The Four Zoas. But the unfinished quality of both poems is intentional. It is to Thomas Warton's credit that he recognized this, disparaging Pope's febrile imitation of Chaucer's The Hous of Fame:

> But . . . he [Pope] has not only misrepresented the story, but marred the character of the poem. He has endeavoured to correct its extravagancies, by new refinements and additions of another cast: but he did not consider, that extravagancies are essential to a poem of such a structure, and even constitute its beauties. An attempt to unite order and exactness of imagery with a subject formed on principles so professedly romantic and anomalous, is like giving Corinthian pillars to a Gothic palace.[22]

But Warton misjudges that imaginative scope cannot be accompanied by logical principles. It is the malleability of seemingly inert physical objects which so fascinated Chaucer with the dream format. Blake built an entire poetic and epistemological creed upon the mental origin of matter, and likewise found the dream ideally suited to explore and illustrate this conviction. In both The Hous of Fame and The Four Zoas, everything is conceived of as animistic, mercurial, changing into each other, and therefore impossible to fix into any single pattern except movement itself.

[22] The History of English Poetry (3 vol., 1774-81; rpt. 1806), I, 396.

Chaucer terms this movement "sound"; Blake, "energy." But it remained for Blake to extend the potentialities of the dream in three specific areas: as existence, methodology and artistic form. The implication for dream-as-existence is that the background matrix is itself intra-psychic, as is any single form contained within it, and can either function healthily or malfunction. The latter is the case for fallen man, caused by an inability to maintain the fluctuating patterns of energetic contraries: search and discovery, dream and wakefulness, need and fulfillment. This dilemma is also the major discovery of Chaucer's dream-poems. In The Boke of the Duchesse, the inability to accept mortality as a natural polarity to life causes the dream to solidify into nightmare; in The Hous of Fame, the Dreamer's reluctance to perceive the universe as a flowing balance causes the poem's sudden abandonment in an unfinished state. For the dream can be both paradisal yet brutally violent. If its process of interpenetration whereby perspectives are freely exchanged in almost a kind of nucleic conjunction is impeded--and this is why "forgiveness" acquires such a significant value for Blake, as it represents a deliberate lysis of ego in favour of another's perspective --then the mental warfare and loveplay of dreams become a destructive nightmare.

As several commentators have pointed out, the closing lines of The Hous of Fame--with their "shipmen and pilgrimes" and "pardoners, currours, and eke messaungers, / With boxes crammed ful of lies" (271v., Rb. 2122, 2127-28)--seem to lead directly into Chaucer's masterpiece, The Canterbury Tales. One can go further and see the dream-poem debouch into The Canterbury Tales which inverts the dream so that it occurs in wakeful fourteenth-century England, using the same spring and singing birds which hitherto occurred within all the dream-poems except The Hous of Fame (whose winter setting is shared in The Four Zoas). The mental journey becomes exteriorized; the bustling pilgrims journeying to Canterbury are naturalistic yet spiritual, as the Parson in the final Tale makes explicit:

> And Jesu for his grace wit me send
> To shew you the way in this voyage
> Of thilke perfit glorious pilgrimage,
> That highte Jierusalem celestiall.
> ('The Parson's Prologue,' 92v., Rb. 48-51)

It is this archetypal aspect of Chaucer to which Blake most deeply responds. "Every age is a Canterbury Pilgrimage; we all pass on, pass on, each sustaining one or the other of these characters" (DesC. 19-20). Because "the characters themselves for ever remain

unaltered, and consequently they are the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life" (DesC. 10), it is possible and critically legitimate to correlate the Canterbury pilgrims to the personae of The Four Zoas. I shall not indulge in this fascinating exercise here, save to remark that the Host becomes equivalent to Albion who contains all the other characters under his direction, holding their conflicting energies in perfect balance, though rivalries break out and personalities clash. In this sense, the various Tales with their discursions back into memory, fantasy and falsehood become equated with the dream, each conducted through dramatic voices (revealing an obsession with the sexual nature of man), but invariably returning at their conclusions to unity, the present and a blessing upon the whole company. Given such a flexible structure, it is not surprising that Chaucer approaches Blake's dimensions of vision in some of these Tales, most notably the Knight's, who would be parallel to Luvah of The Four Zoas:

> Yet saw I Woodnesse laughing in his rage
> Armed complaint, theft, and fierce courage,
> The carraine in the bush, with throte ycorve,
> A thousand slaine, and not of qualm ystorve:
> The tirant, with the prey by force iraft,
> The toune destroyed, there was nothing left.
> Yet saw I brent the ships hoppesteres,
> The hunter istrangled with the wild beres:
> The sow fretting the child incradle . . .
> (6r., Rb. 2011-19)

It is small wonder that such a vision of history as horror cannot be maintained by Chaucer except momentarily. But just as his deeply personal dream-poems culminate in the wakeful realism of The Canterbury Tales, so the dream schema of The Four Zoas is used again in a more objectified sense in Milton and Jerusalem.

(B) LANGLAND

Chaucer's originality lay in transforming the autonomous and artificial dream-garden of the French tradition into an accurate reflection of the Dreamer's wakeful mind. This permits the Dreamer's "sicknesse" or artistic limitations to be confronted within the poem. But Chaucer never completes his equation in order that the dream might invert back toward wakefulness and thereby transform it. The insights gained in the dream are rarely appropriated, but rather used as raw materiale to be transcribed, upon waking, into esthetic form which itself remains inconclusive because the Dreamer is merely a reporter, in spite of intense pressure to the contrary. Hence the dream never becomes dialectical as it does for Blake, John Bunyan and the author of Piers Plowman. Chaucer remains the "great poetical observer of men, who in every age is born to record and eternize its acts. This he does as a master, as a father, and superior" (DesC. 14). It is significant that when the dream does force him to become reflexive he is reduced to naiveté, vulnerability and fear--qualities which Piers Plowman's Dreamer, Will, exemplifies to a far greater degree, for they are the necessary prerequisites to fully enter the dream.

Chaucer sets up the technical structure for immersion within his dream, but chooses not to complete the circuit to flow back into the dayworld. For this would generate an erosion of external control and submergence into a subjective world carried to such an extreme that it seems wholly objective--an excellent working definition of insanity. Medieval psychology recognized this dangerous facet of dreams under the classification of somnium-phantasma, occurring on the threshold of sleep in what is now termed the hypnogogic state. The recognized fourteenth-century authority on dreams, Macrobius, describes this state as follows:

> In this drowsy condition, the sleeper thinks he is still fully awake and imagines he sees spectres rushing at him or wandering vaguely about, differing from natural creatures in size and shape; and hosts of diverse things either delightful or disturbing.[1]

Unfortunately no reliable method was considered to exist to distinguish whether any particular dream originates from indigestion, the previous day's activity, the Devil, or God. Chaucer delights in playing with this ambivalence, allowing his dream-poems to reverberate on several levels--for example, he satirizes the Black Knight's rarefied devotion to romantic love, yet

[1] Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, p. 89.

simultaneously praises him in a eulogy presumably read publicly to John of Gaunt. But he also takes refuge in the ambivalence.

It remained for Chaucer's contemporary, William Langland, to extend the dream-vision genre by creating a rich conjunction of inner and outer worlds. In what seems to be a total innovation, his Dreamer undergoes a sequence of dreams, thus permitting a constant juxtaposition of wakefulness with dream. Not only do his dreams reflect outer life, absorbing the Dreamer to an extent which Chaucer never dreamed of (so to speak), but each dream is pondered during the wakeful intervals until the exterior becomes synonymous with the interior, the temporal with the timeless. What is gained by this synthesis is what Blake terms prophetic vision. But the price is stylistic disjunction, obscurity, and the risk of total absorption into the dream, i.e., madness:

> And after my waking, it was wonders long
> Ere I could kindly know, what was dowel
> And so my witte wexe & wained, til I a fole
> And some lacked me self, alowed it few . . .
> Folk helden me a fole, and in that folye I raiged
> Tyl reason had ruth on me, and rocked me a slepe
> Tyll I se as it sorcerye were, a sotle thynge wythal
> One wythoute tong or teth, told me whither I shold
> And whereof he came and of what kynde . . .
> (Passus XV, lxxvii)[2]

[2] All quotations from Piers Plowman are from the edition available to Blake (and used by Thomas Warton

in The History of English Poetry), The Vision of Piers the Plowman, ed. Robert Crowley (1550). This is the so-called 'B' text, reprinted again by Owen Rogers (1561), and the only printed edition available to Blake until the 'C' text edited by T. D. Whitaker (1813).

It is not known whether Blake read Piers Plowman, though the text was available to him in two editions, and was extensively quoted by Thomas Warton in The History of English Poetry.[3] But in terms of content and style it is, to my mind, a closer precursor of The Four Zoas than any other poem in English.[4] Its

[3] Michael Phillips suggests in conversation that Blake was almost certainly acquainted with Warton's work, though no annotated copy has yet been found. Warton devotes two chapters to Langland, transcribing some 18 pages from Piers Plowman, and another 11 from "Piers the Plowman's Crede." He praises Langland's satire, humour, sublimity (comparing him to Milton), prophetic gifts and "much sense and observation of life, with some strokes of poetry" (I, 267), but criticizes his "extremely perplexed manner" which "disgust[s] the reader with obscurities" (I, 266-67). The same charges, of course, are often directed against The Four Zoas.

[4] So far as I know, the following study of Langland and Blake is the first of its kind. This is surprising, considering that Frye remarks that Langland "is perhaps spiritually closer to Blake than any other English poet" (Fearful Symmetry, p. 304), and notes that Piers Plowman stops at the triumph of the Antichrist with which Blake concludes Night VIII. Jean H. Hagstrum, in William Blake: Poet and Painter (1964; rpt. 1978, pp. 29-30, n. p. 30), speculates, "It is tempting to believe that Piers Plowman was responsible for [Blake's] association of things medieval with an aroused social conscience." Hagstrum notes that in a work which Blake and his master Basire illustrated, Richard Gough's Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain . . . (1786), prominent quotations from Piers Plowman are cited at the head of several chapters.

complexity prohibits here the detailed comparative study which should be undertaken to establish its profound analogies with Blake. But at least the most important can be considered.

First, the overall structure of both poems is remarkably parallel. Piers Plowman's central Dreamer, Will, experiences a series of dreams (altogether seven, plus three dreams-within-dreams) interpolated by brief waking periods where he becomes progressively more desperate in his quest to discover "How I may saue my soule" (Passus I, 6v.). Each dream proceeds to instruct Will who, however, is bewildered by the surrealistic conflicting forms he encounters. Each wakeful period permits him to interpret his previous dream and his failure to fully understand it. This alternation between wakefulness and dream forces each to become clarified: paradoxically, this means that the dreams become more naturalistic, as Will learns how to circumnavigate within them, whereas the wakeful world becomes more oneiric, until the two levels fuse within the final five apocalyptic chapters. Langland's Will can be equated with Blake's Albion in that he is the external matrix which contains the dream, both passive spectator yet active participant. After his first devastating dream, Will staggers 200 yards and collapses again into sleep: "And then I saw much more, then

I before of tolde" (Passus 5, 21v.). At one point he weeps behind the dream, as his dream-self encounters the Seven Deadly Sins.

One notes that Albion's disintegration on the wakeful level of The Four Zoas does not occur instantly either, contrary to appearances, but at the beginning of Night II. Meantime he is reported to "wander from his house of Eternity . . . turning down / The Vales to find his way back into Heaven but found none / For his frail eyes were faded and his ears heavy and dull" (I.21.10, VIIA.83.16-18). There is even enough time (within the fluctuating temporal scale of Beulah where the Fall occurs) for Urizen to grow up and have children (VIIA. 83.19-20) flourishing around the tent where Albion lies stricken, before the events of Night II have yet happened. At the beginning of Night VIII Albion momentarily "began / To wake upon the Couch of Death" from the "horrible dreams hovring high over his head" (99.11-12, 6). Finally, an indication of his constant presence within the dream occurs in Night IX when he wakes and, still prone, laments, "In this dark world a narrow house I wander up & down" (120.3). Of course, he means the motion within the dream--"My sons exiled from my breast pass to & fro before me" (119.33)--in the sense that he is the dream. The same desperate activity

is expressed most vividly in Ahania's cry from the grave, where she describes Albion as present in "tree & herb & fish & bird & beast" (VIII.110.6), yet remaining stationary:

> He touches the remotest pole & in the Centre weeps
> That Man should Labour & sorrow & learn & forget
> & return
> To the dark valley whence he came.
> (110.18-20)

I dwell thus on Albion's tangible, though diffused, participation within his own dream because many scholars maintain that he is but tangential.[5] In fact the dream does not definitively end until the colophon, "End of The Dream"; hence Albion's centralizing activity in Night IX still occurs within the dream. He wakes, as he falls asleep, by stages; and his dream possesses autonomy in direct proportion to this transition.

It is noteworthy that sounds from within Albion's dream cause him to wake: "this sound of rage of Men drinking each others blood," and "Mystery howling in these flames of Consummation" (IX.120.11, 4). This is a device developed by the French dream-vision poem, utilized again by Chaucer and Langland. Will's various dreams wake him sometimes through the hubbub of arguing disputants, as at the end of the Visia; or a dream

[5] For example, Helen T. McNeil maintains that "Albion is at most a referential frame for the action, and not a character, as he is in Jerusalem" (op. cit., p. 374).

figure weeping, such as Haukyn whose repentance at the end of Passus XIV is parallel to Los' regeneration at the end of Night VIIA; or finally, the dancing and singing of the Resurrection in Passus XVII, with Easter bells ringing both within and outside the dream, waking him to the same Easter morning of the historical present.

Both Will and Los' quest throughout their respective poems is "Collecting up the scatterd portions of . . . immortal body" (VIII.110.7), each portion condensing and dissolving as it sheds its residue of dream illusion, until the reality waiting dormant behind--the wakeful Dreamer, released from his dream--emerges almost as an incidental side-effect from the quest itself. Will's encounters with the personae of his dream gradually differentiate dream <u>phantasma</u>, as does the mature artistic labour of Los and Enitharmon in Nights VIIA and VIII. Will never achieves the states of Dowel, Dobet and Dobest, but rather absorbs them. What at first is perceived as "a fayre felde ful of folke" (Passus I, 1r.) gradually separates into two opposing armies by the end of the poem, the Church versus the Antichrist. The same polarization takes place in <u>The Four Zoas</u>, whose major victory is to begin with disjunction--Tharmas' cry of "Lost! Lost! Lost!" (I. 4.7)--and gradually "fabricate embodied semblances"

(VIIA.90.9) which oppose each other in the final two Nights.

It is significant that Will's greatest impediment is to confuse "intellectual lust" and satire as the only criteria to distinguish illusion from reality. He is constantly rebuked for this: first by Lady Church, who chastises him as a fool and informs him that only "kynde knowing" can be a valid guide (Passus I); then by Ymagynatyf (Imagination), who explains how his vision of Kynde Nature was distorted through "entermetyng" (interfering, Passus XII)--an activity each of the Zoas perpetuates. Finally, Anima criticizes his Urizen-like tendency to use the dream material for strictly intellectual means:

> Yea sir I sayde, by so no man were greued
> All the Sciences under sunne, and all the suttel craftes,
> I wold I knew and coud, kindly in mine herte.
> Than arte ÿ imperfit q. he, and one of prids knightes
> For such a lust and liking, Lucyfer fel from heauen.
>
> (Passus XV, 78v.)

A striking parallel between The Four Zoas and Piers Plowman is each poem's textual ambiguity. Langland's poem exists in three separate versions. Many reasons for this fact have been advanced, but they remain inconclusive, and Charles Muscatine rightly points out that "Piers Plowman must in important ways

be inconclusive; that its form and style are symptomatic of some sort of breakdown."[6] Part of this breakdown occurs in the philosophical struggle or quest articulated by the poem; and part in the subsuming of various medieval literary genres which are finally abandoned in favour of a totally new form. Evidently, the same dilemma occured to Blake while composing the original Vala. But rather than write a totally new version, he went back over his original draft and began to extensively revise it. We shall explore the ramifications of this phenomenon later;[7] it is enough now to note that the complexity and apparent incompletion of both poems is directly related to its context within the dream-vision. Spearing's explanation for Langland's variant texts is equally pertinent to The Four Zoas:

> Almost inadvertently, perhaps, he [Langland] had transformed the dream-poem from an objective into a reflexive form, one which would mirror his whole spiritual history, and in doing so would inevitably have near its centre the struggle to get itself written. He could proceed only by going back, rewriting his poem from the beginning.[8]

[6] Poetry and Crisis in The Age of Chaucer (1972), p. 72.

[7] See particularly Chapter VI, pp. 517-19.

[8] Medieval Dream-Poetry, p. 151.

As a corollary, a further parallel between both poems here is each poet's attempted but finally abortive socio-political revolution in a premature Apocalypse. Langland's first version of his poem (the 'A' text) is more externalized, concerned with reforming natural man in society through a revolutionary ideal feudal state. The field full of folk crystalizes into a hierarchy of labour led by Piers, but this precarious balance disrupts back into anarchy at the end of the Visia. Hence Langland was forced to begin his poem again, this time as a more internalized spiritual pilgrimage which culminates in Christ's birth, Passion, Resurrection and Harrowing of Hell, returning enriched back to the same field of the Prologue, and using the same agricultural imagery of New Testament eschatology as does Blake in Night IX. This same progression may be traced in Blake's career. "A Song of Liberty" and the Lambeth Books use apocalyptic imagery to herald the American and French Revolutions unleashed by Orc; but with their failure Blake was forced back to a more personalized search which, like Langland's, culminates in The Four Zoas with Christ's birth, crucifixion and an Apocalypse which actually transposes specific apocalyptic passages from the earlier political works into this new context.

Both poems share a final structural parallelism in their conclusions. Each conjoins defeat and victory on dual levels. Piers Plowman ends with the Church defeated from within, most of its inhabitants "enchauted" by Dr. Flatterer: "Contrition lieth & dreameth . . . & so doth many other" (Passus XX, 66r.). I suggest that this is precisely the same dream which Will undertook at the beginning, the necessary pilgrimage each persona must begin on his own. Likewise Blake concludes his poem by returning to the dream which continues to grip most of humanity locked in time:

> Nature in darkness groans
> And Men are bound to sullen contemplations in the night
> Restless they turn on beds of sorrow. in their inmost brain
> Feeling the crushing Wheels they rise they write the bitter words
> Of stern Philosophy & knead the bread of knowledge with tears & groans
> (IX.138.11-15)

The parallel holds in a second sense: both poems are open-ended, even inconclusive. Langland's Conscience proceeds to continue dying Will's pilgrimage to "become a pylgrime / And walken as wyde, as the worlde lasteth / To seke Pierce the Plowman" (Passus XX, 67v.). Likewise Urthona at the end of Blake's epic "rises from the ruinous walls / In all his ancient strength to form the golden armour of science / For intellectual

War" (IX.139.7-9). Langland's Christ has jousted with the Devil in Piers' armour; Blake continues to forge the same weaponry for the same intellectual and esthetic struggle in his later two epics which flow directly out of this seminal poem.

In addition to thematic parallels, The Four Zoas and Piers Plowman share a stylistic obscurity which is considerably ameliorated when regarded as a deliberate utilization of dream techniques. These can be classified under three general categories, though each overlaps and augments the other: dream-time, dream-space and dream-narrative.

First, each barely attempts to follow the traditional Western schema of a sequential plot, but radically modifies historical time by the use of dreamlike contraction and expansion, the superimposition of an Eternal or atemporal level upon the temporal, multiple perspectives dissolving in constant flux, abrupt transitions which seemingly defy all logic, and dreams-within-dreams. Such techniques cause confusion to readers who expect a linear structure depending upon clearly delineated cause and effect. But it is precisely this rigidness of conventional time and space

which Langland and Blake attempt to dissolve. The structure of the poem is a manifestation of its own theme.

Practically the entire action of The Four Zoas takes place in a dream's omnipresent tense, using participial construction plus a constant barrage of concrete imagery which the splintered senses of the Zoas inflict upon each other and upon the reader. Langland condenses historical time within the life span of one individual particularly through the use of dreams-within-dreams as an intensification of vision. The first such interior dream occurs in his vision of Middle-earth, where in the Mirror of the World forty-five years of Will's life are annihilated in an instant. The Four Zoas' most vivid and prolonged interior dream is the Garden of Vala episode of Night IX, "the land of doubts & shadows sweet delusions unformd hopes" (126.22), just as Langland's Middle-earth is "the land of Longing" where "mightest thou se wonders / And know that ye coutist, a cone thereto peraducture" (Passus 11, 63r.). As usual, Blake carries the technique even farther than Langland, for his episode includes triple enclosed dreams.[9] Enion and Tharmas

[9] It may be that both Langland and Blake modelled their use of interior dreams upon Dante, who uses several dreams-within-dreams in the Divine Comedy (e.g., Purgatorio IX.1-42, XIX.7-33, XXVII.91-108).

here are reincarnated as children, passing through adolescence in a similar condensation of historical time as Langland's, whereby they learn patience just as does Will.

In addition to condensing the past through dreams, both poets utilize dreams as clairvoyant, what Macrobius classified as visio. Both constantly erupt into prophecy, envisioning future historical events as well as the final Apocalypse. J. F. Goodridge points out that Langland

> is one of the few writers in whose work it is difficult to distinguish between prophetic insight--that sometimes works on a historical or eschatological level--and plain truthfulness . . . At almost any stage in his narrative, he can rise easily to a point of view from which he can relate present facts to first causes and final ends . . . This gift of prophetic vision lends to the poem a time-scale vaster than that of any epic.[10]

The same could be said of The Four Zoas. And it is this ability to modify historical time which accounts for the epigrammatic brilliance of both poets.

In Piers Plowman's second interior-dream (Passus XVI), past and future are subsumed in a single mercurial

[10] Piers the Plowman, trans. & ed. Goodridge (1959; rpt. 1975), p. 14.

scene. Will views the Jesse-tree of the human heart, whose complex symbolism enacts the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve, then continues through compact, surrealistic transitions to the birth and life of Christ. In this same manner, Blake's Los views the crucifixion through a divinatory vision which the poem's narrative ostensibly catches up with only in Night VIII:

> I see, invisible descend into the Gardens of Vala
> Luvah walking on the winds, I see the invisible knife
> I see the shower of blood: I see the swords & spears of futurity
> (I.11.12-14)

Yet the final events of both poems exist simultaneously with the preceding narrative. Blake accomplishes this technically by the use of the image-cluster of Luvah suspended in a cloud of blood at crucial junctures of the poem; Langland, by the figure of Piers appearing and disappearing in mysteriously protean forms. But both writers actualize the past and future in a fluid present. Though the Zoas are terrified by "visions of futurity" (II.33.7) and obsessed with memories of a Fall from a dimly remembered Golden Age, their flashbacks and indeed flashforwards which seize them like epileptic convulsions, causing momentary repentance such as Urizen's at the end of Night V, dissolve back into the even more terrifying <u>terminus a quo</u> of the present where any valid resolution must be achieved.

The dissolution of linear time is accompanied by the dissolution of Euclidean space, the second dream technique used in both poems. The dream is ideally suited to elucidate this, for it exists both within a single locus (the Dreamer's mind), yet embraces any number of perspectives. The contents of Will's dreams possess a curious independence of his own volition ('<u>will</u>'), in a real sense living (or possessing) him. Individuality in both poems becomes communal, a flowing of semi-autonomous forces which at times coalesce--as, for example, Anima subsumes nine of the previous characters in Passus XV--and at times differentiate, as Conscience continues the pilgrimage at the end of the poem, independent of dying Will. For Blake, such multiplicity within unity is a fundamental tenet manifested in its purest form in the Eternals:

> Contracting their Exalted Senses
> They behold Multitude or Expanding they behold as one
> As One Man all the Universal family and that one Man
> They call Jesus the Christ.
> (I.21.2-5)

In this same technical manner, Piers Plowman metamorphoses from a simple farmer into the Gardener of Eden, Good Samaritan, Christ/Knight, and Church. The Seven Deadly Sins change from human figures into patches on Haukyn's coat into the "conglobing" (I.15.19) horror of the Antichrist; the Edenic tree becomes a crucifix.

Figures appear and dissolve with no explanation, such as Ymagynatyf. Such suspension of physical causality allows Langland freedom to link seemingly unrelated objects with discursive concepts in a way impossible in a strictly representational poem. He describes the process of thought itself, not merely a finished artistic or mental product. This jagged, amorphous quality of both poems must be considered integral, indeed intentional. Elizabeth Kirk describes Langland's technique in terms applicable to The Four Zoas, and is worth quoting at length:

> This is what makes Piers Plowman the most dreamlike of all the medieval dream visions . . .by exploiting to the full the possibilities of the dream for letting images melt into complementary images and figures melt out into many manifestations, coalesce into more inclusive ones, or reappear in new meanings whose continuity with the old ones is a matter of pure connotation almost totally devoid of denotation. In places this method succeeds in transmitting to the reader the vivid immediacy and almost intolerable pressure of actual dream, in which we are taken possession of by something we can recognize as our own experience but stripped of the controls and modulations consciousness can always impose on empathy. In such states, complete intimacy and total strangeness coexist.[11]

This leads naturally into the third dream technique used by Langland and Blake: a surrealistic dramatic

[11] The Dream Thought of Piers Plowman (1972), pp. 180-81.

narrative. Charles Muscatine describes Langland's style as "producing a hallucinatory effect, in which the distinction between abstract and concrete, moral and physical have all but been lost."[12] The grotesque Seven Deadly Sins, for example, become not so much strictly allegorical as organic entities at once realistic yet bestial. Each is an embodiment of a particular propensity in man which if carried to an extreme destroys the human form and becomes demoniac. Unlike the next author we shall consider, John Bunyan, Langland abandoned the diagrammatic schema of the medieval allegory except for surface detail. In spite of the manifest intellectual content of the poem, his imagination is chiefly visual and dramatic, grafting homely imagery upon abstractions to such a degree that the abstract is superseded by the very form in which it is clothed. It follows that the 'spiritual' can only be reached through the empirical, and is in fact a particular configuration of the empirical. But neither Will nor Albion can decipher the wakeful world in this ultimate sense without the aid of their dreams. The dream is the connecting link between the two levels, for it allows the abstract

[12] Chaucer and The French Tradition (Berkeley, 1957), p. 101.

to become incarnate within the visual, working solely through concrete imagery. The fluid nature of such dream imagery allows it to take different permutations in a kind of cryptogram which the Dreamer attempts to decipher. In short, the dreamlike quality of Blake and Langland's imagery serves as the pivotal method whereby they achieve insight. This is the precise opposite of explicit allegory, for it is grounded upon initial frustration in the face of fantastical, terrifying or enigmatical experience. Each dream figure in Piers Plowman seems to know vastly more than Will, lecturing him at length on how he should conduct his quest; but the majority of these counsellors are hypocritical liars trying to inflict their limited perspectives upon the Dreamer, as do the Zoas upon each other and upon Albion. Will must learn through painful trial and error which of the many personae he encounters are but illusionary alter egos, and which are intrinsically real.

The Four Zoas carries Langland's technique to an extreme. Not only are the personae in a constant state of flux, but the background matrix collapses with them as a direct result of their degenerating senses. To be sure, each Zoa symbolizes a particular psychological faculty; but representational solidity is eroded by its split from the wakeful world. Allegory per se

cannot function in the fallen dream-world, but becomes only a final synthesis viewed in retrospect. It could be said that each Zoa's quest is to discover his true allegorical content which then becomes totally "visionary" in Blake's sense; but he <u>begins</u> with disjunction. Context in <u>The Four Zoas</u> is itself contaminated, and cannot serve as even a valid connotative guide. Blake carries such fragmentation to a far greater degree than Langland or for that matter any other English poet. Humanity can lose its "Human form Divine" and degenerate into outright bestiality:

> No more erect tho strong drawn out in length
> they ravin
> For senseless gratification & their visages
> thrust forth
> Flatten above & beneath & stretch out into
> bestial length.
> (VIII.102.9-11)

Or it can transform into bizarre conglomerates of flesh and machine, anticipating the Industrial Revolution:

> And scaled monsters or armd in iron shell or
> shell of brass
> Or gold a glittering torment shining & hissing
> in eternal pain.
> (VI.70.35-36)

Man can even be absorbed into the elements which remain animistic as within a dream:

> multitudes were shut
> Up in the solid mountains & in rocks which heavd
> with their torments . . .
> Some as columns of fire or of water sometimes
> stretched out in heighth.
> (VI.70.28-29, 37)

The final disintegration is into the abstract "dreams of Ulro," or the background matrix of the dream itself --inchoate colour and shape, smells and sounds--which serves as raw material for the more aggressive Zoas to manipulate.

The major difference between Piers Plowman and The Four Zoas, however, is that Langland retains the courtly dream-vision tradition of authoritative personae to interpret his dream. The Eagle acted as a much needed corrective for Chaucer; Ymagynatyf, Anima and Conscience, among others, perform the same function for Will, who otherwise is bewildered by the conflicting claims made on his judgement. But Blake carries the solipsistic nightmare aspect of his dream to an extent unrealized by Langland.

Finally, Will's artistic stance as amanuensis of his own dream ultimately impedes total participation within that dream. Ymagynatyf charges Will that "ÿ medlist w makigs [poetry]" (Passus XII, 60r.). The solution is not to abandon poetry altogether, for he admits later that "To sheperds and to poets, appeared the angell / And bade hem go to Bethleem, gods birth to honour" (Passus XII, 62r.). Rather one must allow the dream to consume the dreamer. We return to Chaucer's acknowledged retreat. Though Langland penetrates deeper into the dream, he yet retains a satirist's perspective,

however finally humble. It remained for Blake to carry the potentialities of the dream-vision genre and its implicit dialectic to its extreme: where the dream absorbs the poet and the narrative Dreamer until both barely exist as separate perspectives but themselves become the contents of their dream whose personae, conversely, are not even aware that they are dreamt, but mistake the dream for absolute reality.

(C) BUNYAN

Would'st thou be in a Dream, and yet not sleep?[1]

In distinguishing allegory from vision, Blake notes that "Fable or Allegory is Seldom without some Vision Pilgrim's Progress is full of it" (VLJ. 69). It will be my contention that John Bunyan's utilization of the dream as a method of narration, stylistic device and a major motif of The Pilgrim's Progress influenced The Four Zoas to a considerable degree. To begin with, despite its humble tinker's origin Bunyan's masterpiece is a continuation of the dream-work as religious visio developed by Piers Plowman. We have noted how the secularized dream-garden of the aristocratic fourteenth-century French poem inverts the Edenic convention, deliberately evoking a fruitful tension between the mundane and the numinous. Whenever the demarcation between these two categories collapses, the possibility exists for the dream-poem to revert back toward the scriptural dreams it cites as ancestors--Joseph, Pharaoh,

[1] The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. James Blanton Wharey, rev. Roger Sharrock (1678; rpt. Oxford, 1960), "The Authors Apology for his Book," p. 7. All references to The Pilgrim's Progress, cited parenthetically in my text, are from this edition.

Nebuchadnezzar, Isaiah, St. John the Divine's Apocalypse.[2] The literary dream is an ideal vehicle for such essentially religious tension, for it superimposes two levels (dream and dayworld) at once interconnected yet separate, associative in a mimetic sense yet vividly alien. Such constitutes a natural framework for weighing different gradations of reality versus illusion. The bizarre quality of dream imagery and its constant presence of violence creates a kind of survival course in which the Dreamer must somehow come to terms with, literally, the contents of his own deep mind. The Dreamer is everything that exists in his dream, yet (like Bunyan's Christian) a vulnerable figure often thwarted, embarrassed or destroyed by elements which have taken on an apparent autonomy. It follows that these confrontations sometimes ending in mergence and sometimes purging the central Dreamer from parts of himself which he no longer avows may become an epiphany of the "progress" of Christian salvation in the wakeful world.

Bunyan returns to the original Biblical dream structure which secular dream literature inverted. By retaining the prophetic and passive "I saw" for

[2] For example, see Chaucer's The Boke of the Duchesse (Rb. 280-83) and The Hous of Fame (Rb. II. 514-17); and Piers Plowman (Passus VII).

strictly religious motifs, his narrative gains in immediacy and mythic scope what it loses in irony and urbane ambiguity. He weds the King James Version with popular episodic chapbooks and folktales which he greatly enjoyed as a boy (condemned by Puritanism as 'fiction'); a Hebraized landscape melds with the familiar countryside of Bedfordshire, much in the same way as Blake carries to an extreme. All the elements of the dream genre are present in The Pilgrim's Progress stripped to their original scriptural denotation. The protagonist, Christian, suffers not from romantic love but rather a spiritual "inward sickness" (50) which disables his normal role, causing him to be accused of "distemper" (9) and put to bed, where he dreams not of a lover but the future Day of Judgement. Bunyan even uses the Roman de la Rose's traditional metaphor of emblematic love-arrows piercing Christiana's heart--but in a spiritual sense, inflicted by God rather than Cupid, and resulting in spiritual rebirth (305). The walls which surround Christian's dream are taken from the walled garden of the traditional dream-poem. But whereas the "Wicket-gate" (10), symbolizing the Church, upon which he knocks is answered by a sedate Good-will, in Chaucer's Romaunt of the Rose the "wicket small" (111v, Rb. 528) is answered by erotic Ydelnesse. Yet even in the earlier French poem, the

possibility for a Christianized dream is present:

> And whan I was in ywis,
> Mine heart was full glad of this,
> For wel wend I full likerly
> Have been in Paradise earthly,
> So faire it was, that trusteth well,
> It seemed a place espirituel. . .
> (112r., Rb. 645-50)

Emblematic shifting tableaux on the walls of the Interpreter's House--some taken directly from emblem books such as Francis Quarles'--preface the dream landscape Christian enters as they do the traditional dream-vision. But whereas the Roman de la Rose and Chaucer use classical emblems, Christian views scriptural scenes which capsulate his own journey and act as correlatives, teaching him how to perceive allegorically--a necessary skill if he is to survive the many hazards. Christian's "What means this?" (29) develops from his previous question motivating his quest, "What shall I do to be saved?" (9). Some of these emblems he immediately comprehends because they correspond to virtues he has already inculcated: the Knight who fights his way into a palace upon which stand persons clothed in gold epitomizes Christian's entire progress culminating in the New Jerusalem with its Shining Ones. Since Christian is a powerful fighter, he intuits the need to pierce vertically forward along a straight and narrow Way:

> Then Christian smiled, and said, I think verily I know the meaning of this.
> Now, said Christian, let me go hence: Nay stay (said the Interpreter), til I have shewed thee a little more . . . So he took him by the hand again, and led him to a very dark Room, where there sat a Man in an Iron Cage.
> (34)

But whenever his forward motion is impeded, reverting to retreat (as returning on the Hill of Difficulty for his scroll), detour (as By-pass Meadow), or outright immobility (as in Doubting Castle), then the tactical principle of forward momentum which underpins the entire book collapses, and he becomes helpless. The Man in the Iron Cage is strangely haunting to Christian because he embodies his own greatest weakness: despair at his unworthiness as stimulated by the Puritan doctrine of Total Depravity, which Bunyan personally believed relegated him to damnation for many years before his conversion. The Man in the Cage represents the precise opposite of Christian's pilgrimage; he has recoiled from the journey and been defeated, entering a stasis like Blake's Albion, with guilt "gnaw[ing] me like a burning worm" (35). One must remember that Bunyan wrote The Pilgrim's Progress while literally in prison, where there existed every possibility that he might not be released, or that he might be hanged, or banished from England together with his family. Both The Pilgrim's Progress and The Four Zoas

share this intensely personal origin, conceiving of the world and self as a prison which can be escaped only through a work of art written not didactically but rather as a subjective breakthrough:

> I only thought to make
> I knew not what: nor did I undertake
> Thereby to please my Neighbour; no not I,
> I did it mine own self to gratifie.
> ("The Author's Apology," 1)

Incarceration is terrifying to Christian because it reflects the Dreamer's own state at the writing of The Pilgrim's Progress. The opening sentence makes this clear: "As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Denn; And I laid me down in that place to sleep" (8). Bunyan's marginal identification of the Denn as "Gael" in his seventh edition makes the analogy explicit. Furthermore, the Caged Man's admittance that he has "shut my self out of all the Promises" (35) links him to Christian's later imprisonment in Doubting Castle, where the undercurrent of despair flowing throughout the book engulfs him again in a "Swound" (116), from which only his dream-like retrieval of the Key of Promise releases him. The same despair crystalizes in the Valley of Shadow, the "Cage" of Vanity Fair, and reaches its final but most intense manifestation when Christian crosses the River of Death. The Caged Man's stasis, in other words, can occur at any single point in the book,

even at the very gates of New Jerusalem where a doorway of Hell is placed into which Ignorance is cast despite his "progress" to this penultimate point: "Then I saw that there was a way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction" (163). The same juxtaposition occurs in The Four Zoas: "Then thou didst keep with Strong Urthona the living gates of heaven / But now thou art bound down with him even to the gates of hell" (V.65.53-4).[3]

In the early stages of his journey Christian requires the aid of interpreters to release the allegorical significance of his dream. These range from the Evangelist to the pastoral shepherds of the Delectable Mountains to the maidens of the House Beautiful. They are parallel to the traditional dream-poem's use of an authoritative guide--such as the Roman de la Rose's God of Love, Chaucer's Eagle and Langland's Dame Kynde--who conducts the Dreamer through the mysterious panels of his dream, thus keeping the more chaotic aspects under control, interpreting cryptic events and exploiting fragmentary images

[3] Could Blake's "The lost Traveller's Dream under the Hill" in The Gates of Paradise ('Epilogue' 8) refer to Bunyan's Hells placed in the sides of hills, the underworld of the dream from which, for Blake, it becomes possible to wake?

into a more universal application. Even Bunyan's marginal identifications and scriptural gloss serve this same stabilizing function, and it is significant that they were largely added after the original book was written, just as The Four Zoas' revisions were spliced onto the original Vala.[4] At times, Bunyan personally inserts himself into the dream to expand more explicit allegorical connotations upon the bare narrative which enmeshes the dream-finite Christian. Again, Christian is rewarded for his increasing perception at various points by 'miraculous' or surrealistic interjections from the "Other World" (subtitle) which constitutes both the exterior yet the deepest level of his dream. When he views the Cross his burden suddenly falls from his back and three Shining Ones appear to give him talismanic objects to aid his quest. In the same way even in Night I of The Four Zoas, above the tortured body of Albion plunged into nightmare "Eternity appeared above them as One Man enfolded / In Luvah's robes of blood" (13.8-9). After Christian's fight with Apollyon, a hand materializes out of the sky with leaves from the Tree of Life to heal his wounds.

[4] Roger Sharrock, in John Bunyan: The Pilgrim's Progress (1966, p. 31), describes Bunyan's marginal notes as "the most integrated marginal commentary in English literature, with the possible exception of that which Coleridge added to The Ancient Mariner."

Blake uses this same image at crucial junctures in his own work: exhausted from his labours to contain Urizen, Los "beheld the hand of God over his furnaces" (IV.56.26). Blake employs the traditional dual levels of the dream-poem by the use of such later revisions as the Eternals meeting in Council and the Daughters of Beulah, both of which serve as wakeful interpretations from the outside of the dream.

As The Pilgrim's Progress continues, the claustrophobic landscape is interspersed with occasional rest-stops such as the House Beautiful, the Delectable Mountains and Beulah, where the traveller is reinvigorated from the rigours of his journey. In this way, by an alternation of night/sleep with day/wakefulness, Christian learns to perceive the New Jerusalem without the aid of an intermediary "Perspective Glass" (122). Blake, too, alternates the chaos of his dream with brief instants of clarity and calm, most notably in Beulah, which almost certainly was influenced by Bunyan. In both writers, Beulah is a pastoral "lower Paradise" (IX.128.30) surrounding the New Jerusalem ("upon the Borders of Heaven" [The Pilgrim's Progress, 155]; "evermore Created around Eternity" [Milton, 30.8]), which the pilgrim must traverse, "the way lying

directly through it" (154). In Blake it is "a place where Contraries are equally True" (M.30.1), and its inhabitants "saw no more the terrible confusion of the wracking universe" (IX.126.23). Bunyan expresses this same balance:

> wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the shadow of death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting-Castle. Here they were within sight of the City they were going to . . .
> (154)

The Four Zoas gradually localizes the original Fall within Vala's garden, Beulah, where she tempts Albion through sexual dreams causing his trance-like sleep. One need not turn to Norse mythology to find literary antecedents for Vala, for she is significantly present in Bunyan's "Inchanted Ground" (136, 297) immediately contiguous to Beulah, a garden choked with thorns and briars where travellers are tempted to rest from their travail, falling asleep in "Arbours" (297) where they "ly till they Rot" (300). This garden holds a particularly insidious spiritual temptation because it occurs at such a penultimate stage, when the traveller's energy is low. Its sleep is caused by the sexual advances of Bunyan's La Belle Dame Sans Mercie, one Madame Bubble who offers "her Body, her Purse, and her Bed" (300). Like Vala and Rahab, she is a "Witch," "Slut" and "a Goddess, and therefore some do Worship her" (301-02). Bunyan traces the entire disorder

of the dualistic fallen world back to her:

> She makes Variance betwixt Rulers and Subjects, betwixt Parents and Children, 'twixt Neighbor and Neighbor, 'twixt a Man and his Wife, 'twixt a Man and himself, 'twixt the Flesh and the Heart.
> (302-03)

In both Blake and Bunyan, an over-prolongation of passivity and sexual repletion causes the pilgrimage to become internalized in a profane (i.e., unhealthy) sense:

> Those that die here, die of no violent Distemper . . . For he that goeth away in a Sleep, begins that Journey with Desire and Pleasure. Yea, such acquiesce in the Will of that Disease.
> (300)

The result is linguistic chaos, as the sleepers babble in their dreams:

> You know when men talk in their Sleep, they say anything; but their Words are not governed, either by Faith or Reason. There is an Incoherencie in their Words now . . .
> (298)

This "Incoherencie" is carried to its zenith in Blake's fallen Zoas as, for example, they perpetuate Albion's central Fall en masse at the end of Night VIII, engulfed by the "numming stupor" (106.19) of the "Shadowy Female" (106.24; i.e., Bunyan's Madame Bubble). It exists as a parody of the true or inspired speech of dreams which Bunyan expresses as occurring in Beulah:

> Now I beheld in my Dream, that they talked more in their sleep at this time, than ever they did in all their Journey; and being in a muse there-about, the Gardener said even to me, wherefore musest thou at the matter? It is the nature of the fruit of the Grapes of these Vineyards to go down so sweetly, as to cause the lips of them that are asleep to speak.
>
> (155-56)

The ambiguities of the dream and its traditional sexual garden are thus present in both Bunyan and Blake. For in The Four Zoas too, the "dreams of Beulah" (IX.126.26) can be positive, as with the Garden of Vala episode of the final Night, where the sleepers upon the "Couches of Beulah" (131.21) enter inverted dreams to rest (like Christian above) from the rigors of the Harvest and Vintage. In fact Blake's beneficial Daughters of Beulah with their expanding and contracting senses may be influenced from a further hint in Bunyan's virginal instructors of the House Beautiful, who condense historical time by showing Christian various scriptural artifacts and refresh him for his continuing journey.

It will be noted that Bunyan first presents the profane metaphor (Enchanted Ground) as a state which must be traversed and transcended, at which point it reverts back to its original Old Testament analogue of God as Bridegroom and Church as Bride. Christian must constantly re-appraise and -adjust his interior

state in order that his prior contamination acquired outside the Wicket-gate will not distort the protean dreamscape through which he passes. When he goes astray, as in By-pass Meadow leading to Doubting Castle, it is because he has been lulled into false security, forgetting that the very ground he treads is treacherous, for it is a subtle reflection of his spiritual condition which remains imperfect until the final New Jerusalem is reached. "No, said Hopeful, you shall not go first, for your mind being troubled, may lead you out of the way again" (113). One can trace throughout The Pilgrim's Progress an alternation of positive and negative periods of sleep (with their concomitant dreams) which the pilgrims must learn to distinguish, beginning with Christian's initial insomnia at the knowledge of his destruction,[5] and ending with the eternal day of the New Jerusalem. Negative sleep--such as in the Arbour on the Hill of Difficulty, By-pass Meadow, or the Inchanted Ground--capsulates Bunyan's prime metaphor for spiritual relapse, and is always accompanied by an intensification of the landscape's negativity:

[5] Compare Chaucer's insomnia in The Boke of the Duchesse, and Ahania's in The Four Zoas--hearing Enion's lament (in a dream), "Never from that moment could she rest upon her pillow" (II.36.19). Sleeplessness becomes a sign of waking out of one's individual dream in order to discover that all humanity exists frozen in a cumulative dream.

> Ah thou sinful sleep! how for thy sake am I like to be benighted in my Journey! I must walk without the Sun, darkness must cover the path of my feet, and I must hear the noise of doleful Creatures, because of my sinful sleep.
> (45)

Precisely this same lament is echoed time and again in The Four Zoas.

If we consider The Pilgrim's Progress as a dream-narrative where seemingly physical objects and events are a reflection both of the various characters' minds and, more fundamentally, of the central Dreamer (Bunyan), the work opens on several levels profoundly analogous to the same techniques used in The Four Zoas. The Dreamer, himself stationary in prison, must of necessity engage in mental travel to transcend and make sense of his own dilemma. Therefore he descends into the ambulatory Christian as a kind of bathysphere to penetrate an interior fluid dreamscape:

> This is like doing business in great Waters, or like going down into the deep; this is like being in the heart of the Sea, and like going down to the Bottoms of the Mountains.
> (242-3)

So Great-Heart describes the Valley of Shadow which Blake expands into the landscape of The Four Zoas. Before he attains a proper name, Christian at first

is simply termed "The Man" (e.g., 10); Blake does the same for his own Albion, who was also at first called "The Man" or "The Ancient Man." Both confront a creation dislocated from its eternal origin, treacherous and problematical, a kind of psycho-topography which is neither physically realistic nor abstractly allegorical but rather a refraction of the dreaming mind. John R. Knott, Jr.'s suggestion is pertinent:

> Bunyan's spiritual landscapes have a fluidity that recalls the shifting terrain of The Faerie Queen. They are often surreal, more like one might expect in a dream than the actual landscapes one might encounter in Bedfordshire.[6]

This requires some clarification. If we examine Christian's first real difficulty, the Slough of Despondency, we see how every object, person and condition which he encounters is in some sense a spatial manifestation of his own changing mental state. As Pliable and Christian indulge in pleasant "discourse" (12) about the future goal of their journey, the ground collapses and they are enveloped by a painful present. Bunyan's explanation for the Slough weds the psychological with the physical: "as the sinner is awakened about his lost condition, there ariseth in his soul

[6] "Bunyan's Gospel Day: A Reading of The Pilgrim's Progress," Bunyan: The Pilgrim's Progress, a Casebook, ed. Roger Sharrock (1976), p. 231.

many fears, and doubts, and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together, and settle in this place" (15). The nightmare actuality of mud captures Christian; even his superb directional instincts, though still functioning (unlike Pliable he struggles toward the side of the Slough farthest from his old home), cannot aid him. He can escape only by laboriously decoding what seems inert matter into its mental constituents. This process is not a simple affair of translating diffuse physical images back into rigid allegorical abstractions, nor vice versa (from the perspective of the writer). Rather one begins with vividly kinesthetic phenomena which threaten the helpless protagonist, thereby forcing him to look within himself for their correspondent mental analogues. Christian must learn through experience, allowing his senses to cross-fertilize his mind. He need not have fallen into the Slough, explains Help, if he did not succumb to fear and ignore "certain good and substantiall [sic] steps" (16) which fluctuate according to "change of weather" (itself psychically determined throughout the book). In fact every danger which Christian encounters contains within itself its own method of resolution. On an allegorical level the steps symbolize scriptural promises; but the promises themselves are of necessity manifested in physical matter in order to interact

with the fallen world. The dream-setting thus allows a constant metamorphosis of the mental/spiritual into the physical/axiological, the same principle taking many forms which the protagonist must learn to recognize in shifting contexts. The promises later show up as the key to unlock Doubting Castle, which Christian once again cannot recognize until he reaches a particular mental state (of despair and humility). When this occurs, the necessary physical object--key or steps--suddenly materializes, though it has been imbedded as a constant potential within the narrative all the time. Such is not inconsistency on Bunyan's part, but rather a strength based upon deliberate dream technique. It is also the fundamental principle which Blake first articulated as such in The Book of Urizen, occuring as a leitmotif in The Four Zoas: "He became what he beheld / He became what he was doing he was himself transformd" (IV.55.22-23). The mental origin of the Slough is made explicit in Part II of Bunyan's work: "He [Mr. Fearing] had, I think, a Slow of Despond in his Mind, a Slow that he carried every where with him" (249).

It is essential to realize that Bunyan, like Langland and Blake, confronts a nightmare "wilderness" (8) simultaneously physical, intra-psychic and ontological, whose scriptural analogues link to the

Israelites' forty years wandering in the Sinai, Isaiah and Jeremiah's apocalyptic wastelands envisioned in dreams, and Job's "land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the Shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."[7] Like The Four Zoas' "world of deep darkness where all things in horrors are rooted" (III.45.14), it is formed of "Wearisomness, Painfulness, Hunger, Perils, Nakedness, Sword, Lions, Dragons, Darkness" (18). At various junctures these dangers intensify, but they are implicit even within the periods of calm which, as in dreams, yet retain turbulent undercurrents. Even the Delectable Mountains contain the bones of pilgrims who wandered off the cliffs of some particular doctrinal error, and blind men stumbling lost among tombs. No physical object is quite solid, but liable to suddenly invert engulfing its victim, such as the various doorways on the sides of hills leading into Hell. (But whereas Bunyan remained terrified of conventional Hell, Blake follows the implosion of objects back into the "Cavernd Universe of flaming fire" [VIIA.77.6], and his pilgrimage is therefore even less horizontal.)

[7] Job 10.22, quoted as a gloss by Bunyan, p. 62. See Blake's letter to Hayley (4 Dec. 1804), which probably refers to The Four Zoas: "I have indeed fought thro a Hell of terrors & horrors (which none could know but myself.) in a Divided Existence now no longer Divided. nor at war with myself I shall travel on in the strength of the Lord God as Poor Pilgrim says."

The ground may collapse, as at Lucre Hill or the Slough, enveloping its victims like some Venus flytrap. The world of both The Pilgrim's Progress and The Four Zoas is cannibalistic and predatory, "full of Snares, Traps, Gins and Nets here, and so full of Pits, Pitfalls, deep holes, and shelvings there" (65), just as Urizen spreads "innumerable the nets / Innumerable the gins & traps" (II.30.1-2). No single landscape exists in either work. Rather each contains a plethora of conflicting worlds, ultimately reducible in Blake's poem to the four principle Zoas. Linear progression at any instant can disappear, be warped or reversed. The travellers are given wrong directions, incarcerated, beaten, burned, hacked to pieces, seduced or raped, and mocked. Once again the similarity of the dream format to science-fiction is obvious: the pilgrims are like astronauts cautiously exploring a planet strangely akin to yet alien from the earth, and to survive they must radically re-orientate their terrestrial preconceptions.

Bunyan never goes so far as to sever his dream-world so completely that it "obliterates" (Blake's term for this process, e.g., "Till the Divine Vision & Fruition is quite obliterated" [III.39.7]) the city of Eternity. But the same total immersion into nightmare is used.

Christian is almost destroyed by the conflicting claims made on his integrity; but the confrontations strengthen him, and he emerges purified. Blake's correspondent hero-traveller, Los, is also overwhelmed by the giant forms he encounters in the fallen dream-world. Though his greatest temptation, too, is suicidal despair, his eventual emergence as the salvational pivot of the fallen world constitutes a major victory of The Four Zoas. Los returns in Jerusalem in terms specifically taken from Bunyan, where he enters Bunyan's wicket-gate in Plate I and pilgrimages to the New Jerusalem. The major difference between each author is the degree to which the Fall is allowed to infiltrate. Bunyan ostensibly describes the return to grace: yet by penetrating backward through scriptural history, and forward to the New Jerusalem, he traces the implicit circuitry whereby the original Fall occurred--the reason why Christian must travel such a painful distance between two contradistinctive cities. Blake begins with the same solipsistic dream-world, but extends it to indict orthodox Christianity as one of the main instigators of that fragmentation. By reversing the direction of Christian's journey, it becomes possible to trace man's progressive deterioration.

A further difference between each author is their use of scripture. Bunyan controls the chaos through which Christian passes by rigidly superimposing upon it the "Map" (297) of the Bible. A constant trans-substantiation of scripture into actuality, and actuality back into scripture, occurs through the marginal texts cited, Christian's Book clutched in his hand, and the overwhelming King James Version phraseology which Bunyan uses as a matrix for his narrative. Such is more than a literary device: it transplants sacred history upon contemporaneity, seeking to resuscitate the analogues to which the scriptural texts refer. Christian's journey tests and actualizes the Bible, but is never a simple matter of following it by rote, for its texts are often seen as enigmatical as well as difficult to interiorize as virtues. The Bible, indeed, is the "Way," but must be constantly re-interpreted through trial by fire.[8] Blake, however, denies himself even this relative structural support in The Four Zoas, and composes his own idiosyncratic Bible of Hell with no map but the mind. Urizen,

[8] Bunyan's autobiographical Grace Abounding (1666) illustrates even more vividly the same Puritan tendency to shuffle seemingly contradictive texts against each other in a kind of deadly game where mere scriptural knowledge does not suffice to pierce through to each text's allegorical and experiential significance.

in fact, seems at times a deliberate parody of Bunyan's Christian: cutting himself off from his Emanation and family, making rigid moralistic distinctions, reading from his Iron Book, continually trying to position himself but sinking into slime (see VI. 71.25ff.), "warring with monsters of the Deeps in his most hideous pilgrimage" (VI.74.10), relegating the vast majority of humanity to "Uttermost extinction in eternal pain" (VIIA.87.55-56), and quoting scripture to support these sanctimonious activities.

Another technique which Bunyan uses to indicate the dreamlike narrative of his work is a multiplicity of perspectives, each of which views either a totally different scene or a modulation of the same. Perception becomes in the eye of the beholder. The Second Part of The Pilgrim's Progress (published in 1684, six years after the first) superimposes upon the same topographical route the gentler feminine perspectives of Christiana and her children. Christian himself is reincarnated here in the figure of Greatheart, who acts as "Conductor" (213) for the band of women and children whose very vulnerability allows them to pass unscathed through most dangers. By penetrating

the same landscape twice, the first narrative is revealed in a new light. For example, the Valley of Humiliation is experienced by Christiana as a "fat Ground" (237) where the pilgrims restore their energies. Christian's heroic fight with Apollyon in Part I is now seen to be caused by his inability to withstand the anonymity of the Valley. The chance "slip or two" he made descending the Hill of Difficulty, mentioned negligibly in Part I (55-56), now is regarded as the direct cause of Apollyon's materialization:

> We need not be so afraid of this Valley: For here is nothing to hurt us, unless we procure it to our selves. 'Tis true, Christian did here meet with Apollyon, with whom he also had a sore Combate; but that frey, was the fruit of those slips that he got in his going down the Hill. For they that get slips there, must look for Combats here. (236)

It is this contiguity of "there . . . here" which constitutes Bunyan's--and Blake's--basic dream technique. It permits causal sequence to operate between any number of seemingly unrelated events. By abandoning daylight logic, it creates new linkages based upon an interconnected dream-universe where every object and action are related in some manner. Christian's 'exemplary' battle with Apollyon was in fact a reflection of his own "vainglory" (58), and need not have taken place at all. The specific locality

where the fracas occurred becomes identified only in Part II as Forgetful Green: "For if at any time the Pilgrims meet with any brunt, it is when they forget what Favours they have received, and how unworthy they are of them" (239). Apollyon as an amalgam of the child's boogeyman, the chapbook romances which Bunyan was fond of as a youth, and Revelation's dire Beast is perfectly at home stalking this dreamscape, as do similar figures through The Four Zoas:

> now the Monster was hidious to behold, he was cloathed with scales like a Fish (and they are his pride) he had Wings like a Dragon, feet like a Bear, and out of his belly came Fire and Smoak, and his mouth was as the mouth of a Lion.
> (56)

One is reminded of Urthona's Spectre scaled in iron and glowing with fire, carrying a huge knotted club, whom Urizen confronts while descending into the vale of Urthona at the end of Night V, just as Christian confronts Apollyon at the bottom of his descent.[9] Yet like Blake's Spectres, despite all his horror, Part II of The Pilgrim's Progress reveals this apparition as a projection of the traveller's own failings:

[9] H. M. Margoliouth, in William Blake (1951, p. 123), notes: "The Spectre straddles the vale like Bunyan's Apollyon, but Urizen does not fight." Blake's watercolour (No. XX) for The Pilgrim's Progress brings out the sexual nature of Apollyon, who has a long dangling phallus beating Christian down. Since this detail is not reflected in Bunyan's text, it seems to refer rather to Blake's own figure of the Spectre. See Blake's Water Colours for Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. G. B. Harrison, Introd. Geoffrey Keynes (N. Y., 1941).

> For the common people when they hear that some frightful thing has befallen such an one in such a place, are of an Opinion that that place is haunted with some foul Fiend, or evil Spirit; when alas it is for the fruit of their doing, that such things do befal them there.
> (236)

When Mr. Despondencie enters the cleansing River, he adds a further explanation that negative qualities slough off the pilgrim at this point and return to cling to any pilgrim attempting the dream-journey:

> For, to be plain with you, they are Ghosts, the which we entertained when we first began to be Pilgrims, and could never shake them off after. And they will walk about and seek Entertainment of the Pilgrims.
> (308)

These "Ghosts" are equivalent to Blake's Spectres who "feed upon our life we are their victims" (VIIA. 90.8). Though intrinsically unreal, they invert the true order, maintaining "The Spectre is the Man the rest is only delusion & fancy" (I.12.29). Thus the ambiguity of the dream, which we have seen exploited in traditional dream-poems as a dialogue between reality and illusion, surfaces in both Blake and Bunyan. Bunyan's Atheist can claim, after twenty years fruitless search, "There is no such place as you Dream of, in all this World" (135); but he does not represent a viable temptation to Christian because it is more painful to return than to go forward. And Blake's

characters often recognize their status as "phantom[s]" (IX.127.21), when the structure of phenomenal reality suddenly "swims like a dream before my eyes" (IX.131.2).

The insubstantiality of the dream obscures the true spiritual topography lying beneath the various layers of phantasma, but also allows those colourful projections to become Blake's "embodied semblances" (VIIA.90.9) susceptible to diagnosis and cure. Before we consider how Bunyan attempts to solve this dilemma, let us examine one other example of how two different perspectives create variant landscapes. Faithful (unlike Christian) experiences no difficulty with the Slough of Despondency, and enjoys balmy sunshine through the Valley of Shadow; his temptations crystalize rather in the figure of Wanton, who doesn't bother Christian at all. Bunyan draws a specific analogy between each man's reaction, however: both attempt to shut their eyes or ears to the exterior temptation, just as Christian initially cauterized part of his sensibility in order to begin the journey by abandoning his family--"but the Man put his fingers in his Ears, and ran on crying, Life, Life, Eternal Life" (10). This rather repugnant image epitomizes the Puritan devaluation of the senses as carnal impediments to the spiritual journey with its strict demarcation

"FROM THIS WORLD / To / That which is to come" (Title-page). But in Bunyan it results more from the pilgrim's need to first differentiate and second exorcise the false values which he "suckt in" in Apollyon's "Native Countrey" (58). Blake expresses the same total commitment through Enion: experience is "bought with the price / Of all that a man hath his house his wife his children" (II.35.12-13).[10] Like Blake, Bunyan views naturalistic human existence as an ironic and tragic inversion of its eternal essence. Christian plugs his ears and closes his eyes in order that he may focus more clearly upon the internal origin of the seemingly materialistic world through which he passes. In doing so he but repeats the iconography of the central Dreamer, Bunyan, who thereby achieves, so to speak, dual hermetically sealed chambers to deepen his internalization.[11] Blake uses sequences

[10] Could the next line of Enion's lament, "Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy" perhaps be influenced by Bunyan's Vanity Fair (e.g., "What will ye buy? but they, looking gravely upon him, said, We buy the Truth. At that, there was an occasion taken to despise the men" [90])?

[11] See Blake's illustration (No. I) for The Pilgrim's Progress, "John Bunyan dreams a dream," p. 167. Here Bunyan lies sleeping, while his dream appears above him in a curving band depicting the entire narrative from Christian fleeing the City of Destruction, through the fight with Apollyon, and ending with the New Jerusalem. This is also Albion's stance in The Four Zoas, except he is wounded and sick.

Blake's illustration (No. I) for

The Pilgrim's Progress:

"John Bunyan dreams a dream"

of open-ended dreams for the same purpose: "Turn inwardly thine Eyes and there behold the Lamb of God" (VIIA.87.44). Both authors are operating upon their own psyches, incising malignant tumours through the scalpels of their principle protagonists, Christian and Los. Bunyan even martyrs himself mimetically through the persona of Faithful at Vanity Fair, which has a poignant and courageous relevance to Bunyan's own imprisonment. The various sins which Christian encounters become deadly only when they cannot be differentiated into precise concrete forms which "confront" him and therefore can be defeated. Both Christian and Faithful experience their worst temptations when this hallucinatory collapse between the inner and outer occurs: Christian in the Valley of Shadow:

> Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning Pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stept up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than any thing that he met with before.
> (63)

And Faithful in the Valley of Humility:

> But indeed this Shame was a bold Villain; I could scarce shake him out of my company; yea, he would be haunting of me, and continually whispering me in the ear, with some one or other of the infirmities.
> (73-4)

Thus the tactical question is to distinguish

falsity (the dream-poem's phantasma) from reality on the basis of a fallen self. Bunyan's solution is profoundly simple, as religious ideas tend to be: to "set your faces like a flint" (87) upon the Way, confronting his enemies squarely. The dream landscape being a perfect mirror of his mind permits confrontation with his own "spectral" aspects. By vanquishing these false selves, he is purified. But whenever this direct visualization is obscured, all is lost:

> For I must tell you, that though Great-Grace is excellent good at his Weapons, and has, and can, so long as he keeps them at Swords point, do well enough with them: yet if they get within him [my italics], even Faintheart, Mistrust, or the other, it shall go hard but they will throw up his heels. And when a man is down, you know, what can he do?
> (130)

The mature Christian here speaks as a veteran, using military jargon (which Bunyan became personally acquainted with from a period of service in the army); but "if they get within him" also applies quite literally, for just as the various enemies he encounters originate from his mind, so they may return and re-absorb him. No guarantee exists that Christian is a valid centre; his vast array of enemies also believe themselves to be genuine pilgrims, and inflict their astigmatic worlds upon each other as do the fallen Zoas. Thus it is even possible for the "brisk Lad"

(123) Ignorance to penetrate to the final gates of New Jerusalem before his error is revealed and he is thrown into Hell. The rigid linearity of the Way is in fact an illusion:

> Chr. Is this the way to the Celestial City?
> Shep. You are just in your way.
> Chr. How far is it thither?
> Shep. Too far for any, but those that shall get thither indeed.
> Chr. Is the way safe, or dangerous?
> Shep. Safe for those for whom it is to be safe, but transgressors shall fall therein.
> (119)

This exchange smacks of Zen Buddhism, with its emphasis upon a semi-illusionary world emanated directly from the mind. Christian is the Way, and the Way is his deepest substratum of self, or Christ, which he recovers by descending into the dream without succumbing to sleep. By simply gazing at the landscape without distortion, it flows before him not as a rigid path but rather a succession of hills and valleys whose dangers evaporate if one simply walks calmly toward them, as does Great-heart to Apollyon and the Lion.

I have stated that Bunyan's fundamental temptation, despair over possible damnation, reoccurs in various forms throughout The Pilgrim's Progress. It returns in Christian's final trial, when he panics in the River

of Death, and begins to sink as he did in his first trial, the Slough of Despondency.[12] Despite his proximity to the New Jerusalem, he reverts back to the familiar darkness, fear, hallucinations ("apparitions of Hobgoblins and Evil Spirits" [157]), as if his old burden were returned upon his back. Now, however, he is accompanied not by Pliant but by Hope, who sustains him in his arms just as Blake's Christ does Albion immersed in Tharmas' "Sea of Time & Space" (IV.56.13), thus permitting the crucial gaze forward.[13] It so happens that the confronted object now becomes the New Jerusalem; but it is Christian's clarity of gaze which causes this revelation and allows

[12] Blake's water colour (No. V) for Christian in the Slough of Despondency depicts Christian's arms and legs dissolving in the water as he slowly sinks beneath the weight of his pack which, Keynes observes (op. cit., p. 15), seems ingrown into his back.

[13] It is fascinating to compare Blake's illustration (No. XXVII) for The Pilgrim's Progress, "Christian and Hopeful in the river," an unfinished sketch showing Christian held feebly in Hope's arms, with his own descriptions of drowning Albion in The Four Zoas, specifically his illustration for MS p. 130. Here a skeletal Albion stares blindly upward waiting for redemption, minute particularity almost bled away, a pose and narrative situation strikingly similar to Christian's. Perhaps Blake deliberately did not water colour his final Bunyan sketch in order to make the analogy between the two characters a personal statement. See pp. 172 and 173, where these two drawings may be compared. I have magnified the Bunyan photograph in order that Christian's features may be clearer.

Blake's illustration (No. XXVII) for

The Pilgrim's Progress:

"Christian and Hopeful in the river"

The Four Zoas, MS p. 130

And he arose out of the river & girded her golden girth
And now her feet step on the grassy bosom of the ground
Among her flocks & she turned her eyes towards her pleasant house
And saw in the door way beneath the trees two little children playing
She drew near to her house & her flocks followed her footsteps
The Children clung around her knees she embraced them & wept & they
How little Boy art Tharmas & thou bright Girl Enion
How are ye thus renewed & brought into the Garden of Vala
She embraced them in tears. till the sun declined the weary hills
And then he entered her bright house leading her newly children
And then night came the flocks laid round the house beneath the trees
She laid the Children on the bed which she had prepared in her house
Then laid herself down down & closed her Eyelids in soft slumbers
And in the morning when the sun arose in the orient sky
Vala awoke & called the Children from their gentle slumbers
Awake O Enion awake & let thine innocent Eyes
Enlighten all the crystal house of Vala awake awake
Awake Tharmas awake awake thou child of many tears
Open the doors of thy blue eyes & smile upon my garden
The Children woke & smiled on Vala. she kneels by the golden couch
She presses them to her bosom & her tears fall down
Why weep Children Enion let Tharmas kiss thy cheek
Why dost thou turn thyself away from his sweet watry eyes
Tharmas henceforth be Valas bosom thou shalt find sweet peace
Bless the bowed eyes of Tharmas & the eyes of Enion
They rose they went out wandring sometimes together sometimes alone
Why weepest thou Tharmas Child of tears in the bright house of joy
Doth Enion around thy sides of thy blue heavenly eyes
And dost thou wander with me Tharmas & thou innocent Enion 500
With thy bright tears because the steps of Enion are in the garden
Come sweet boy & let us follow the path of Enion
So saying they went down into the garden among the fruits
And Enion sang among the flowers that grew among the trees
And Vala said go Tharmas weep not go to Enion

the mergence of scripture with experience to magically occur once again, articulating coherence out of chaos.

Given this homogeneity between Christian's tribulations throughout various stages of his journey, it is perhaps not critical hyperbole to regard Bunyan's future New Jerusalem as in some sense synonymous with its past City of Destruction. Both cities possess doorways outside their gates opening into Hell; both are communal structures linked by the solitary journey across a fluctuating dreamscape which begins with falling asleep (night) and ends with waking (eternal day). This journey penetrates the exterior of objects and mental states which exist as inverted parodies of their essence. Just as Beulah is surrounded by and blends into its false representation, the Inchanted Ground, so the New Jerusalem is the core reality of the peripheral City of Destruction, the wakefulness beyond the slumber of those inhabitants still outside the dream-circle. Los expresses this same inversion in the climactic Night VIIA: "Even I already feel a World within / Opening its gates & in it all the real substances / Of which these in the outward World

are shadows which pass away" (86.7-9). Christian does not arrive at the New Jerusalem: he returns. It is therefore only natural that his emanation, Christiana, makes the same journey in Part II to join him, for the couple's attraction now becomes polarized in its true centre. In the same manner, Urizen's regeneration in Night IX releases his stalemate with Ahania, and she joins him in a gentler condensed version of his more violent and dialectical journey.

The difference between both author/s' destinations is that Blake must literally build his New Jerusalem from scratch, beginning with a crude iron Golgonooza, for "Jerusalem his Emanation is become a ruin / Her little ones are slain on the top of every street / And she herself led captive and scattered into the indefinite" (I.19.1-3). In The Four Zoas Jerusalem slumbers as a dormant potential within Enitharmon's gates; therefore the pilgrimage is conducted in particularly transpersonal and sexual terms. But both Blake and Bunyan end their works in apocalyptic transfiguration, what Roger Sharrock characterizes for The Pilgrim's Progress as "an almost musical pattern of recurrence and variation" following the adagio of the previous narrative.[14]

[14] The Pilgrim's Progress (Oxford, 1960), p. 352.

The pilgrims' senses are revitalized--"Their Ears now filled with heavenly Noises, and their Eyes delighted with Celestial Visions" (304); they leave their "Mortal Garments" (158) behind; one by one they are summoned to unity. Whereas Bunyan's pilgrims must cross the final River of Death, Blake's most undergo "self annihilation back returning / To Life Eternal" (VIIA. 85.34-35), or the same metaphor developed in Milton, "To bathe in the waters of Life; to wash off the Not Human" (41.1). There seems little doubt that these "Ceremonies of Joy" (306) which culminate Bunyan's masterpiece influenced Blake's Apocalypse of all three epics, particularly his description in Night IX of each Zoa and Emanation becoming reabsorbed back into the central unity of Albion.

But the major difference between Blake and Bunyan's treatment of their respective dreams is clarified by how Bunyan's Dreamer returns to his own persona after his dream ends: "And after that, they shut up the Gates; which when I had seen, I wished my self among them . . . So I woke, and behold it was a Dream" (162-3). Bunyan remains ultimately separate from his dream, and the struggles and victories he achieves are but poignantly mimetic. Blake, on the contrary, immerses himself so totally into his dream that he disappears

as a separate perspective. We return to Blake's distinction between allegory and vision in A Vision of the Last Judgment. Allegory is "a totally distinct & inferior kind of poetry" (68) because it perpetuates the status quo of fallen time and space through merely symbolic approximations; limited by memory, it cannot extrapolate beyond the tragic failure of history. Vision, on the other hand, is "A Representation of what Eternally exists . . . by the daughters of imagination" (68), a mode or rather infinite modes of perception, the metabolic basis of true existence itself, not merely a literary genre. It follows that in order for any work of art to become "visionary" it must abandon mimetic linkages to the known, and recreate the unknown. This is Blake's task in The Four Zoas: to turn the phenomenal world inside out in order that its interior may interact directly without any interpretative mediaries. By dreaming, Blake penetrates the interior of mind and objects; by waking, he returns to outer form as a flowering of the root of the dream. Yet this oscillation is itself present within the dream where a constant interchange of fluid perspectives occurs, a constant modulation of time and space. When dreaming is thus experienced as both cause and effect, the outer world is shaken

from its rigidness, and revealed as essentially imaginative; whereas the inner world is resurrected from inchoateness, and wedded to its outline which becomes one with the dream.

(D) MILTON

"Milton lov'd me in childhood & shew'd me his face," wrote Blake in a letter to Flaxman (12 Sept. 1800): his influence is corroborated by numerous echoes within Blake's first work, Poetical Sketches. "One of the great poetic alliances in the history of English literature"[1] continued with his critique of Paradise Lost in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Europe's inversion of "On the Morning of CHRISTS Nativity," and in Milton the embodiment of the earlier poet within Blake. Given this extensive Miltonic context for much of Blake's earlier poetry,[2] it is reasonable to expect a similar evocation in his first attempt at epic. In fact Blake identified some generic influences of his "long Poem" in a letter to Butts from Felpham (25 Apr. 1803): "I have in these three years composed an immense number of verses on One Grand Theme Similar to Homer's Iliad or Milton's Paradise Lost the Persons

[1] Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton (1975), p. 3.

[2] See especially, S. Foster Damon, "Blake and Milton," The Divine Vision: Studies in the Poetry and Art of William Blake, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto (1957), pp. 91-96.

& Machinery intirely new to the Inhabitants of Earth (Some of the Persons Excepted)." In assessing the manifest indebtedness of The Four Zoas to Paradise Lost, one must keep in mind Blake's qualification of "Similar to" yet "intirely new." But the differences between the two works are themselves dependent upon their complimentarity.

It will be my contention that Milton's first epic more deeply influenced Blake's than any other work except the King James Bible. The Four Zoas is filled with detailed analogies, allusions, specific quotations, revisions of and conceptual borrowings from Paradise Lost to such a massive extent that its correct reading requires Milton's poem to be kept continually in mind as a kind of infrastructure. These generic influences may be divided into five major categories: (1) A basic structural metaphor of Paradise Lost is sleep, dreams and blindness; the treatment of these motifs constitutes an implicit development of the secular dream-vision poem. Blake extends Eve's dream to form the nucleus of his own epic. (2) Each epic's narrative action operates on two opposite but simultaneous levels: Eternity and post-lapsarian time and space. (3) Milton's angelology accounts for many of the perceptual qualities of Blake's Zoas. (4) The locale of both epics is identical in their treatment of Hell, chaos,

war in Heaven, ruined Eden and the post-lapsarian world. Blake coalesces these to form a single Fall. (5) Milton's personae are transferred into a different context in Blake. Each Zoa is an amalgam both of Adam and Eve, and of the fallen Angels; Urizen subsumes Jehovah and Satan.

A few of these influences have been documented previously, notably by S. Foster Damon and Harold Bloom. I shall confine my remarks primarily to original material, acknowledging previous commentary where applicable.[3]

It may at first seem a misnomer to classify Paradise Lost under the genre of dream-vision poetry; but a certain validity for doing so exists. First, on several occasions when invoking his Hebraized Muse, Urania, Milton hints at a dream origin for his epic:

> If answerable stile I can obtaine
> Of my celestial Patroness, who deignes
> Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,
> And dictates to me slumbring, or inspires
> Easie my unpremeditated Verse.
> (IX.20-24)[4]

[3] It should be remembered, however, that if all the references in The Four Zoas to Paradise Lost which have already been critically considered were included in my study, an even more massive relationship would be evidenced.

[4] All quotations from Milton's poetry are from

Poetical Works of John Milton, ed. Helen Darbishire (Oxford, 1958). References for Paradise Lost will be cited parenthetically in my text.

> More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchang'd
> To hoarce or mute, though fall'n on evil dayes,
> On evil dayes though fall'n, and evil tongues;
> In darkness, and with dangers compast round,
> And solitude; yet not alone, while thou
> Visitst my slumbers Nightly, or when Morn
> Purples the East. . .
> (VII.24-30)

That Blake responded to these assertions of dream guidance is evident from his allusion to the above passage in a letter to Dr. Trusler (16 Aug. 1799):

> But I hope that none of my Designs will be destitute of Infinite Particulars which will Present themselves to the Contemplator. And tho' I call them Mine, I know that they are not Mine, being of the same opinion with Milton when he says That the Muse visits his Slumbers & awakens & governs his Song when Morn purples the East.[5]

Now whether we are to take these explanations literally or metaphorically in the Old Testament tradition of dreams as a means through which God communicates with the prophet remains a superfluous distinction. The only truth which concerns the reader, in this context, is that contained within the poem. The epic voice which both Milton and Blake unsheath, ostensibly to reveal the naked self, is itself a persona subject

[5] The Letters of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (1956), p. 38.

to the fluctuating contextual rhythms and internal laws of the poem, and cannot legitimately be isolated in any 'factual' sense. Blake, too, refers to the origin of his prophetic books as dictation from, variously, Angels, a faery (Europe), or his beloved younger brother Robert, who died in 1787: yet the interpretation we give to these assertions depends upon how the poem re-defines our preconceptions, including definitions of such key words as 'Angel' or 'spirit.' When Milton states in his poem that his poem originates through actual dreams, one must investigate not the biographical credibility of his statement but rather that meaning which his poem imparts to the unknown component 'dream.'

If Milton's assertion is to be taken seriously, one might expect to find evidences of dream structure and concern within the poem's dramatic narrative, not merely the proems. This is in fact the case, in two respects. First, the authorial epic voice develops a complex of images around a dream motif applied to the individual poet and more generally to contemporary man. Second, a series of specific dreams throughout Paradise Lost links to the rest of the narrative in such a way that the entire poem takes on many characteristics of the traditional dream-vision. These two levels eventually fuse: dream origin becomes manifested in dream structure.

Let us begin with Milton's authorial voice as it develops the image-cluster of dark/light and dream/wakefulness from a first-person perspective. Both the poem and the author's situation at the time of its writing begin with darkness. Blake divides The Four Zoas into specific Nights of a dream; Milton's night, on one level, originates in his own literal blindness. This interior dark is manifested externally in the first two books' depiction of Hell, with images of cold, lightless fire, stasis, descent and imprisonment. Blindness becomes a superb metaphor for man's fallen state simply because it is so implacable, unable to be resolved in any physical sense. Milton can sense light as a tactile presence upon his eyelids; but he cannot see it directly, and remains plunged into subjective dark:

> I sung of Chaos and Eternal Night,
> Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
> The dark descent, and up to reascend,
> Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,
> And feel thy sovran vital Lamp; but thou
> Revisit'st not these eyes, that rowle in vain
> To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn:
> So thick a drop serene hath quencht thir Orbs,
> Or dim suffusion veild.
> (III.18-26)

The entire fallen world, the mysterious origin of evil and the dormant but unrealized presence of spiritual light here crystalizes within Milton's own vocation as poet. The pattern of his "dark descent" to describe

Hell, and uncontaminated return to describe Heaven, becomes a paradigm for Jesus' incarnation. His separation from the cycle of the seasons and the "human face divine"[6] capsulates the disjunction of nature incurred in Book X as a result of Adam and Eve's sin:

> Thus with the Year
> Seasons return, but not to mee returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or Summers Rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
> But cloud in stead, and ever-during dark
> Surrounds me, from the chearful waies of men
> Cut off, and for the Book of knowledg fair
> Presented with a Universal blanc.
> (III.40-48)

Yet just as the macrocosm of the Fall is particularized within his blindness, so is its potential reversal:

> So much the rather thou Celestial Light
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight.
> (III.51-55)

Here Milton's blindness becomes a possible (for he is praying) asset. The internal eyes planted as bulbs may restore the vernal bloom of external nature; the "mist" obscuring his eyes is imagistically linked to Satan who enters Eden as "a black mist low creeping"

[6] Blake evidently derived his own "human form divine" (SI "The Divine Image" and FZ IX.126.10) from this phrase. But where Milton is concerned primarily with the face, Blake's revision shows an emphasis upon the entire body as an expression.

(IX.180); the radiance potentially irradiating the poet's mind is analogous to the Holy Spirit who, creating the world as a poem, "Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss / And mad'st it pregnant" (I.21-22). Milton's theme necessitates blindness to physical objects, for it concerns spiritual prehistory. His mind becomes a kind of tabula rasa ("Universal blanc") upon which God imprints the lost shape of Eden and the shape of the poem. It is significant that this same pattern is present within God who, as pure light, deliberately swathes himself with darkness in order that he may be perceived:

> Fountain of Light, thy self invisible
> Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sittst . . .
> Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appeer.
> (III.375- 380)

Such darkness, whether mimetic or actual, is seen as a prerequisite for prophetic vision. The intermediaries between God and creation appear as gradations of progressively dense shadow, from the absolute invisibility of God (hence the difficulty in justifying his ways to man) to the translucence of the Son ("Divine Similitude / In whose conspicuous couten'ance, without cloud / Made visible, th'Almighty Father shines" [III. 384-86]), down the Renaissance hierarchical ladder through the various order of Angels, the human male, female (who perceives God through her husband), animals,

plants, blind worms and inanimate matter.[7] Blake's Eternal Family displays the same faceted unity, with the same almost unlimited capacity for either creation or destruction: "Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brother's face / Each shall behold the Eternal Father" (IX.133.25-26). At the farthest spectrum comes Satan who is a "Son of Darkness" (VI.715) for Milton, just as Blake characterizes him as "opake" and resistent to light (VIII.101.33-37). Darkness becomes, in effect, Milton's methodology, for it spontaneously evokes internal imagery which--unlike Blake--he consistently restrains through stylistic rigidity and orthodox Christian doctrine in order not to waver past the thin line into profane phantasma as, for example, did Swedenborg in his trances.

The interior vision which Milton attempts to evolve is manifested externally in the figure of God as a giant eye at the centre of the universe ("th'Eternal Eye, whose sight discernes / Abstrusest thoughts" [V. 711-12]), and in the four creatures which draw the divine chariot:

[7] Cf. C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (Oxford, 1942; rpt. 1961), pp. 73-75.

> The Chariot of Paternal Deitie,
> Flashing thick flames, Wheele within Wheele undrawn,
> It self instinct with Spirit, but convoyd
> By four Cherubic shapes, four Faces each
> Had wondrous, as with Starrs thir bodies all
> And Wings were set with Eyes, with Eyes the Wheels.
> (VI.750-55)

These Zoas engage in warfare, adapting the traditional dream- and love-poem's image of the eye as shooting arrows which wound the beloved. Their spherical 360-degree sight becomes a kind of lazer beam which Satan and his company are unable to endure:

> every eye
> Glar'd lightning, and shot forth pernicious fire
> Among th'accurst, that withered all thir strength,
> And of thir wonted vigour left them drained,
> Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fall'n.
> (VI.848-52)

It seems possible that the dramatic potentialities of the Zoas occurred to Blake through Book VI of Paradise Lost, for both poets use Ezekial's visionary beasts in a military sense: Blake for internal war upon earth, Milton for external war within Heaven. But Blake revises Milton by transforming the Zoas from pristine instruments of God's wrath to the battling components of man's fallen psyche.

I have stated that Milton's authorial voice in the proems extends the tropes of sleep, blindness and dream outward toward the main body of the narrative, where they are met by the same images originating from a cosmic context. This technique links the subjective

with the absolute, the theodicy with the emerging form of the poem itself. The most obvious narrative reflection of Milton's blindness occurs in the perceptual distortions caused by Adam and Eve's sin. The Serpent conducts his temptation in specifically optical terms:

> in the day
> Ye Eate thereof, your Eyes that seem so cleere,
> Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
> Op'nd and cleerd.
> (X.705-08)

Both Adam and Eve aspire to the visual clarity of the Godhead and its Zoas. Their fall is generated through a distorted hierarchy of gazing which, becoming narcissistic--the Serpent gazes upon and worships Eve, who gazes upon and worships the Tree, as earlier she (unwittingly) gazed upon and worshiped herself in the pool (Book IV)--impedes the dovetailed flow of the Eternal plane. The immediate effects of eating the fruit indeed cause a certain heightening of sight, but at a terrible price:

> each the other viewing,
> Soon found thir Eyes how op'nd, and thir minds
> How dark'nd; Innocence, that as a veile
> Had shadowd them from knowing ill, was gone.
> (IX.1052-5)

The eye has lost its unity, splitting into a subject which confronts a detached object as alien--in this case, man versus woman, or Blake's sexual wars. The same instant occurs time and again in <u>The Four Zoas</u>,

for example: "Their eyes their ears nostrils & tongues roll outward they behold / What is within now seen without" (II.25.22-23). Milton's fallen couple suffers from an excess of fragmented objects which deadens their capacity for visionary insight. Adam realizes "Those heav'nly shapes / Will dazle now this earthly, with thir blaze / Insufferably bright" (IX. 1082-4). In this manner every Angel becomes terrible, transformed from friendly interpreters to harsh guards with flaming swords prohibiting entrance to Eden at the conclusion of the poem. Since normal sight directed outward cannot endure nor finally even register spiritual forms--the echo of the Satanic Angels fleeing in terror from the Zoas blazing with eyes is evidently deliberate, now that Adam has also fallen--the only recourse for the artist who attempts to recover those forms is to work from the interior outward. Milton's endeavour is amplified narratively by Adam's visions of human history in the final two books, where the visual blindness and myopia caused by the Fall are partially reversed:

> Michael from Adams eyes the Filme remov'd
> Which that false Fruit that promisd clearer sight
> Had bred; then purg'd with Euphrasie and Rue
> The visual Nerve, for he had much to see;
> And from the Well of Life three drops instilld.
> So deep the power of these Ingredients pierc'd,
> *Even to the inmost seat of mental sight,*
> *That Adam now enforc't to close his eyes,*
> *Sunk down and all his spirits became intranst.*
> (XI.412-20, my italics last 3 lines)

Adam's stance is now equivalent to Milton's at the time of the writing of the poem. The transic state depicted here applies both to prophetic vision and poetic creation (Milton's use of "intranst" immediately evokes its Latin origin, transitus). It initiates the optical breakthrough for which Milton could only pray in his previous proems. Adam opens his eyes "In the Visions of God" (XI.376) to a synopsis of human history, bleakly negative in Book XI (just as is the same view of history in The Four Zoas' penultimate Night VIII, where Los becomes Adam ranging through history from Eden to Blake's own deistic 18th-century), but positive and Christocentric in the final book (just as is Blake's Apocalypse). Yet it is significant that Adam is unable to endure this vision unsupported, and depends upon Michael as the traditional dream-vision guide to achieve his ultimate resolution: "Now first I finde / Mine eyes true op'ning, and my heart much eas'd" (XII.273-4).

It is evident that Blake responded deeply to this motif of blindness in Paradise Lost, for The Four Zoas is filled with Miltonic images of darkness and the subtle distortions of the fallen visual sense. The "orb" of Milton's eye and world with "dim suffusion veild" becomes personified in Vala, who veils

phenomenal existence in shadowy dream-inversions. Blindness in the charred desert dreamscape of The Four Zoas is simultaneously man's affliction yet his potential grounds for redemption. Though bound upon the stems of vegetation by the Female Will, resulting in atrophied sight as with Adam and Eve ("These fibres of thy eyes that used to wander in distant heavens / Away from me I have bound down with a hot iron" [VIII. 105.34-35]), man yet retains the ability to achieve imaginative vision through that blindness. Enion, whose "bright Eyes decayd" (I.8.10) until she "blind and age-bent crept upon the desolate wind" (I.8.10) becomes the first of Blake's fallen personae to attain genuine insight. But Blake's ultimate adaptation of Milton's blindness occurs within his central dreamer, Albion, whose "eyes sink hollow in his head" (VIII. 108.31),[8] and who remains, like Milton, at both the centre and circumference of his dream-poem:

> For every one opend within into Eternity at will
> But they refused because their outward forms
> were in the Abyss
> And the wing like tent of the Universe beautiful
> surrounding all
> Or drawn up or let down at the will of the
> immortal man

[8] Wittreich (op. cit., p. 29) identifies Albion of this passage quoted in full with Milton in Plate 42 of Milton, but does not detect the correspondence with Milton's blindness. "But the passage also serves to remind us that Blake uses the image of the death couch less to depict individuals than to depict states in which individuals find themselves."

> Vibrated in such anguish the eyelids quiverd
> Weaker & weaker their expansive orbs began
> shrinking
> (VI.74.1-6)

Here the "wing like tent" represents the quivering eyelids of Albion tortured by nightmare; when "drawn up" in spiritual vision, the Apocalypse begins. The power of Milton's articulation of darkness itself causes spiritual vision to emerge. Likewise Blake's poem ends by healing the dualistic split between eye and object caused by the Fall:

> The Sun has left his blackness & has found
> a fresher morning
> And the mild moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless
> night
> And Man walks forth from midst of the fires the
> evil is all consumd
> His eyes behold the Angelic spheres arising
> night & day
> The stars consumd like a lamp blown out & in
> their stead behold
> The Expanding Eyes of Man.
> (IX.138.20-25)

Milton's radical inversion of sight as inward-directed in order to recover spiritual form constitutes his own, and Adam's, breakthrough, enabling "A paradise within thee, happier farr" (XII.587). Blake's Adam, Los, likewise comes to discover "a World within / Opening its gates and in it all the real substances / Of which these in the outward World are shadows which pass away" (VIIA.86.7-9). Through his blindness Milton receives imagery which gains in depth whatever it loses in "The Colour and Surface of Things" (Second

Defense). The pressure of these images cast as upon a dark screen forces his imagination to expand through the closed gates of the fallen body, destroying the barrier between history and eschaton. The Four Zoas as a dream-poem deliberately places itself within this tradition. Michael Phillips, relating the blind Samson of Samson Agonistes to Blake's early prose-poem Samson, points out that "It was the common belief of nearly all eighteenth-century writers on Milton that his great 'Compensation' for his loss of sight and isolation was that he was enabled to see into worlds of the imagination further and with less hindrance than any of his predecessors in the language."[9] In this context, Phillips quotes from Milton's Second Defense:

> To End, As for my Blindness, I prefer It,
> if I Must have One either to that of Salmasius,
> or Your's. Your's is Sunk into your Deepest
> Senses, Blinding your Minds, so that You can
> See nothing that is Sound and Solid; Mine,
> Takes from Me only the Colour and Surface of
> Things, but does Not take away from the Mind's
> Contemplation, What is in Those Things of
> True and Constant . . . So shall I prove at
> the same time the Most Weak and the Most Strong;
> Dark-Blind and at the same time Clear-Sighted;
> O Let Me be Consummate in this Weakness!
> in this, Perfected! Let Me be Thus Enlighten'd
> in This Darkness!

"Dark-Blind" and "Clear-Sighted" fuse to form the 'insight' of the traditionally blind prophets whom Milton cites as his predecessors. The same emphasis

[9] "Blake's Early Poetry," William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes, ed. Paley & Phillips (Oxford, 1973), p. 23.

upon interior "Vision" is a major tenet of Blake, who accentuates the visual and kinetic powers of the imagination to such a degree that it inverts the external world. The following celebrated assertion in A Descriptive Catalogue should be placed within the context of Milton's blindness we have traced:

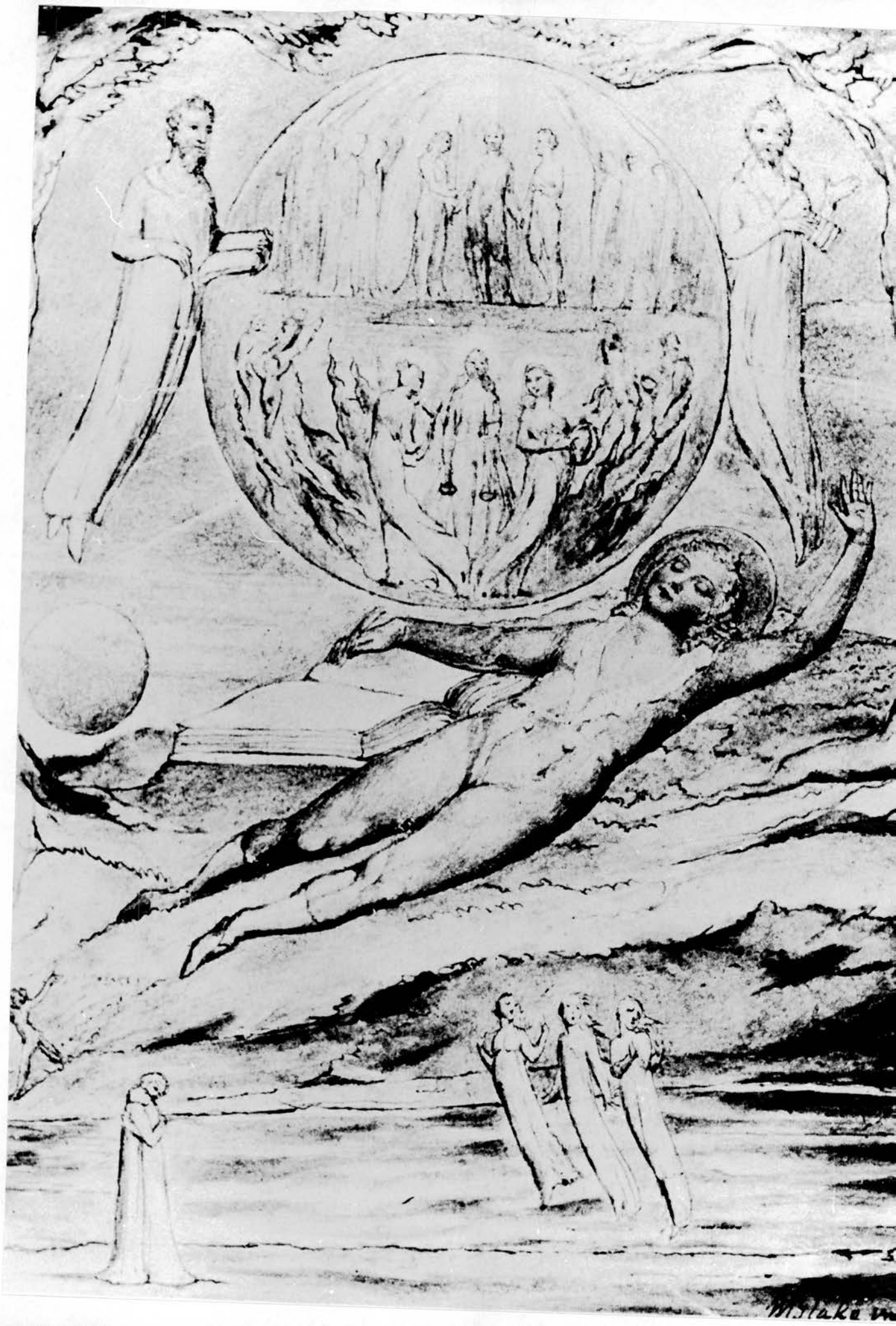
> The Prophets describe what they saw in Vision as real and existing men whom they saw with their imaginative and immortal organs; the Apostles the same; the clearer the organ the more distinct the object. A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing mortal eye can see does not imagine at all.
> (37)

Blake's response to this aspect of Milton is epitomized by his sixth watercolour for L'Allegro, showing young Milton sleeping while the setting sun is replaced by an interior sun accompanied by Shakespeare and Jonson.[10] Blake's inscription reads: "The youthful Poet sleeping on a bank by the Haunted Stream by Sun Set sees in his Dream the more bright Sun of Imagination." The poignance evoked here is that the mature Milton's literal blindness was, in Blake's estimation, but an intensification, indeed

[10] See illustration, page 196.

L'Allegro (VI):

"The youthful Poet sleeping on a bank by the Haunted Stream by Sun Set sees in his Dream the more bright Sun of Imagination."



symbolic ratification, of a creative state which could only be attained earlier by voluntarily closing his eyes and opening himself to dreams.

The distinction between dream and vision is often tenuous for both poets. Blake links the two in a letter to Butts from Felpham (25 Apr. 1803):

> Now I may say to you what perhaps I should not dare to say to any one else. That I can alone carry on my visionary studies in London unannoyd & that I may converse with my friends in Eternity. See Visions, Dream Dreams, & prophecy & speak Parables unobserv'd & at liberty from the Doubts of other Mortals.

The allusion is to Joel 2.28, referring to one of the signs of impending Apocalypse: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." Bunyan, Milton and Blake reached backward through the secular tradition of the dream-vision genre to retrieve the Judaeo-Christian association of dreams with prophetic communication from God. But we have seen that medieval psychology was keenly aware of the danger of confusing divinely inspired <u>oraculum</u> with diabolical ones or with subjective <u>phantasma</u> which were considered nonsensical. The same ambivalence is carried over in <u>Paradise Lost</u>'s treatment of dreams, which we shall now consider.

Adam's prophetic vision presented in the final two books is paralleled on a lesser scale by Eve, who is given dreams by Michael. When Adam descends the Hill of Vision he discovers Eve already waken with her feminine equivalent of his revived mental sight. She states:

> Whence thou returnst, and whither went'st, I know;
> For God is also in sleep, and Dreams advise,
> Which he hath sent propitious, some great good
> Presaging.
> (XII.610-13)

Here "vision" is a predominately masculine activity, and "dream" feminine--a distinction Blake often draws in his Daughters of Beulah who are unable to endure the vicissitudes of holistic prophetic vision, instead encountering the same material and attaining the same insights through the lunar world of dreams. What Adam envisions in terrifying grandeur, plus the resolution these synoptic panels of vision produce in him, is reiterated on a gentler scale in Eve's final dream, her revelation that history centers in and the Fall is overcome by the "Promised Seed" (XII.623) within her womb.

So the final two books of Paradise Lost literally occur as dream-vision. It is noteworthy that their function in the epic as a whole has caused the most

difficulty to readers from Milton's time to the present. But they link to the rest of the poem, once again, through a series of dreams. Michael draws a specific analogy between Eve's final dream and Adam's at the creation of Eve in Book VIII:

> let Eve (for I have drencht her eyes)
> Here sleep below while thou to foresight waks't,
> As once thou slepst, while shee to life was formed.
> (XI.367-69)

If we turn now to Adam's dream to which Michael refers, the parallels between his final vision on the Hill and his prior dream of Eve's creation are explicit, and begin to indicate how the dream motif threads through the entire poem:

> In that celestial Colloquie sublime,
> As with an object that excells the sense,
> Dazl'd and spent, sunk down, and sought repair
> Of sleep, which instantly fell on me, calld
> By Nature as in aide, and clos'd mine eyes.
> Mine eyes he clos'd, but op'n left the Cell
> Of Fancie my internal sight, by which
> Abstract as in a trance methought I saw . . .
> (VIII.455-62)

Here the distinction between dream and wakeful reality is removed. What occurs <u>within</u> Adam's dream--Eve's biological creation by God--simultaneously takes place <u>outside</u> it. The modern reader cannot help comparing this function of dreams to an anesthetic, for Adam is literally operated upon by God, his "Life-blood streaming fresh; wide was the wound" (467) prefiguring Jesus' crucifixion as the second Adam.

That dreams are intended by Milton as a kind of buffer-zone between man and God is further evidenced by another dream of Adam's 160 lines earlier, immediately following his own creation. Both sides of God's appearance to Adam in Book VIII are insulated by dreams (the obvious parallel is the darkness surrounding God). Here the underlying ambivalence of dreams is seen more clearly, combining the apparent effects of death, illusion, yet strict representation:

> Pensive I sate me down; there gentle sleep
> First found me, and with soft oppression seis'd
> My droused sense, untroubl'd, though I thought
> I then was passing to my former state
> Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve:
> When suddenly stood at my Head a dream,
> Whose inward apparition gently mov'd
> My Fancy. . .
> (VIII.287-94)

Adam's need to discover "who I was, or where, or from what cause" (270) is answered by this dream, where God takes on the role of the conductor of the traditional dream-poem, acting as "thy Guide / To the Garden of bliss" (298). This his first dream wakes him to his own origin; his second wakes him to Eve's. In both cases the dream blends into the wakeful world as a wholly accurate reflection: "whereat I wak'd, and found / Before mine Eyes all real, as the dream / Had lively shadowd" (309-11). God transports Adam in his dream upon a panoramic journey, alluding perhaps to Chaucer being shown the world by the Eagle

in The Hous of Fame :

> by the hand he took me rais'd,
> And over Fields and Waters, as in Aire
> Smooth sliding without step, last led me up
> A woodie Mountain. . .
> (VIII.300-03)

This dreamlike locomotion combining the elements of earth, water and air within the figure of God as light is a daring image attempting to depict God's omnipresence. Upon a mountaintop (which is the same Hill of Vision Adam later ascends with Michael as his dream-guide), the single most fundamental object defining the parameters of Eden is confronted:

> Each Tree
> Load'n with fairest Fruit, that hung to the Eye
> Tempting, stirrd in me sudden appetite
> To pluck and eate: whereat I wak'd.
> (306-09)

The most important implication of Adam's first dream is its detailed parallelism with Eve's precognitive dream of her temptation, in Book IV. On the surface this would seem contradictory in that God conveys Adam's dream, whereas Satan conveys Eve's. But it is precisely such ambivalence which Milton wished to evoke.

Eve, too, confronts in her dream the Tree of Knowledge. But whereas disobedience stops short in Adam's case by a colon (": whereat I wak'd"), resulting in his immediate waking and God's interpretation, Eve steps over a frighteningly swift period from temptation to sin:

> the savourie smell
> So quick'nd appetite, that I, methought,
> Could not but taste.
> (V.84-6)

Adam experiences his dreamlike flight before his dream-temptation; Eve experiences it after. The difference is crucial:

> Forthwith up to the Clouds
> With him I flew, and underneath beheld
> The Earth outstretcht immense, a prospect wide
> And various: wondring at my flight and change
> To this high exaltation; suddenly
> My Guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down,
> And fell asleep; but O how glad I wak'd
> To find this but a dream!
> (V.86-93)

"But a dream!" is bitterly ironic. Eve's dream is "uncouth" (98) not merely because it originates from Satan in the double disguise of a toad and Angel, but because it bases a valid concept upon false premises. To desire to achieve celestial flight is not in itself wrong--Adam has flown in his own dream. Man is not a static state but rather a fluid process which ultimately may evolve into pure spirit:

> time may come when men
> With Angels may participate . . .
> Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,
> Improv'd by tract of time, and wing'd ascend
> Ethereal.
> (V.493-94, 497-99)

But Eve's dream distorts such spiritual flight into immediate gratification. Her actual sin in Book IX enacts the same intoxicating expansion followed by the sudden absence of her dream-guide, and descent into post-lapsarian sleep:

> As with new Wine intoxicated both
> They swim in mirth, and fansie that they feel
> Divinitie within them breeding wings
> Wherewith to scorn the Earth: but that false Fruit
> Far other operation first displayd.
> (IX.1008-12)

Eve's dream-temptation occurs in two stages reiterated in her actual temptation four books later. First, it disrupts Eden's rhythm of diurnal activity alternating with nocturnal sleep. Adam wakes refreshed before dawn, as usual; but Eve remains asleep, "with Tresses discompos'd, and glowing Cheek" (V.10)--foreshadowing her condition after sinning in Book IX ("But in her Cheek distemper flushing glow'd" [887]), and foreshadowed by the emotional fluctuations which Satan undergoes on Mt. Euphrates (IV.114-19). Unlike the Eternal rhythm of "Aerie light" (V.4) sleep, Eve has sunk deeply into her dream-world and must be woken by Adam: "Awake . . . Awake" (17, 20). We encounter this summons repeatedly in the traditional dream-poem and The Four Zoas, where it signals the sleeper's dangerous absorption into his dream from which he may never emerge unless someone or something from outside that dream retrieves him. Albion, for example, wakes each of the Zoas from their cumulative "stony stupor" (VIII.107.21ff.) in the final Apocalypse. The sophisticated level upon which Satan weaves daylight motifs throughout Eve's dream is seen in how

he imitates Adam's voice, giving the same summons--"Why sleepest thou Eve?" (28). The dream wakes her to a heightened but ominous sense of verisimilitude, a moonlit underworld which seems the inverse of the diurnal one:

> now is the pleasant time,
> The cool, the silent, save where silence yeilds [sic]
> To the night-warbling Bird, that now awake
> Tunes sweetest his love-labord song; now reignes
> Full Orbd the Moon, and with more pleasing light
> Shadowie sets off the face of things.
> (V.38-43)

Eve's decision to explore this dream-world, with its romantic fine amour traditional to the dream-poem, replaces sleep with activity and sun with moon, thereby preparing the stage for further perceptual distortions: the Tree seems "much fairer to my Fancie than by day" (53) because it is folded in shadow. The same imbalance initiates her actual temptation in Book IX (205-225), where she exaggerates the active polarity of Eden over its passive--i.e., she is overly concerned about keeping the garden under cultivation. This motif is carried over into The Four Zoas, where the Edenic "Days & nights of revolving joy" (I.3.11) with their seasonal cyclicism (the Emanations sleep winters and are resurrected springs) solidify into Albion's sleep, with "horrible dreams hovring high over his head" (VIII.99.6).

The second stage of Eve's dream-temptation is that it replaces Eden's equipoise with an egocentric version. Satan maintains that the moonlight world exists to worship Eve: "Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire, / In whose sight all things joy" (45-6). Now it is noteworthy that Adam upon trying to interpret Eve's dream senses less its precognitive quality than its retrospective:

> Som such resemblances methinks I find
> Of our last Eevnings talk, in this thy dream,
> But with addition strange . . .
> (114-16)

He refers to their conversation at the end of Book IV, regarding the raison d'être of the nonhuman universe. Here Eve, enthralled by the dusk, asks: "But wherefore all night long shine these, for whom / This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?" (57-8). Adam's answer, seemingly satisfying her, describes a delicately attuned universe where every thing reflects each other in a plenitude of forms, irradiating even the unborn with the past light of stars. The absence of active human consciousness caused by sleep does not invalidate nature, but rather shifts praise onto a more circadean plane. But that Adam is not wholly satisfied with his own answer is evidenced by his rephrasing of the same question put to Raphael at the beginning of Book VIII:

> Something yet of doubt remains . . .
> When I behold . . .
> this Earth a spot, a graine,
> An atom, with the Firmament compar'd
> And all her numberd Starrs, that seem to rowle
> Spaces incomprehensible . . .
> in all thir vast survey
> Useless besides.
> (VIII.13, 15, 17-20, 24-25)

Adam too finds it difficult to mesh the immense size of the scientific universe into a humanistic context. The genuine resolution of this issue, which perturbed Milton in Copernican terms as it did Blake in Newtonian, is that magnitude increases the splendour of creation which yet flows into and out of man. The human form divine acquires its dilating and contracting proportions only when both sides of the oxymoron balance. But the danger is to try to resolve the tension by centering nature upon totally human premises, blocking the flow through the Renaissance hierarchical scale. Satan maintains, in Eve's dream, that nature is "In vaine, / If none regard" (43-4)--and this is the burden behind her question the previous night, as Adam recognizes. Satan uses her uncertainty as a wedge to centre the beauty of night solely in her own person. The actual temptation merely reiterates the same argument: "One man except, / Who sees thee? (and what is one?) who shouldst be seen / A Goddess among Gods" (IX.545-7).

In short, the dream-temptation presents in synoptic form what unravels in slow motion four books later.

In both, Eve is first separated from Adam,[11] seduced by Satan's mellifluous disguises (first voice then form), falsely worshipped as a "Goddess" (V.78, IX. 547), views the "Fruit Divine" (V.67, IX.776), succumbs to its sensual "Savourie smell" (V.84, IX.579), and worships the Tree as does the Angel in her dream. Her dream is a perfect example of Macrobius' precognitive visio and Blake's "Visions of futurity." Contextually, it creates a doomed tone to the couple's sojourn in Eden, linking the actual temptation to psychological motifs prevalent at least five books before. Thematically, it serves as a warning, paralleling Adam's dream of celestial flight to the same Tree. But whereas God interprets Adam's dream, Adam fails to accurately interpret Eve's. The fine detail of her dream dovetails so explicitly into her actual temptation that it should serve as a preventive safeguard; but both Adam and Eve take it as a disturbing fantasy which had best

[11] It is significant that Adam becomes separated from Eve in three instances: within Eve's dream, her actual temptation, and Adam's dream of her creation. Milton disparages the first two of these alienations as unnatural, yet praises the third. Blake, however, coalesces all three to form the negative separation of man's emanative self from primal unity: "O how Los howled at the rending asunder all the fibres rent / Where Enitharmon joind to his left side" (IV.49.7-8). One notes that Milton's Eve also originates from the left side of Adam's chest.

not be probed too deeply.[12] The danger of dreams, Adam counsels, is that the mind's image-making ability intensifies in the absence of the external world until it overwhelms reason its usual regulator, and veers back toward the psychic chaos which preceded creation:

> But know that in the Soule
> Are many lesser Faculties that serve
> Reason as chief; among these Fansie next
> Her office holds; of all external things,
> Which the five watchful Senses represent,
> She forms Imaginations, Aerie shapes,
> Which Reason joining or disjoining, frames . . .
> Oft in her [Reason's] absence mimic Fansie wakes
> To imitate her; but misjoining shapes,
> Wilde work produces oft, and most in dreams.
> (V.100-06, 110-12)

Milton here repeats standard Renaissance psychology. His innovation is that he symbolically localizes the Fall within the phenomenon of dreams--as does Blake, who uses the same metaphor of psychic insurrection to trace the blame back not to "Fansie" but rather "Reason." The parallel between Adam's analysis of dreams here and Lucifer's midnight rebellion in Heaven is so striking Blake obviously collated the two incidents to form a single Fall. For in Heaven, Lucifer wakes his "subordinate" with the same summons which he wakes Eve ("Sleepest thou Companion dear, what

[12] Is there a deliberate echo here of Chaucer's Chanticleer in "The Nun's Priest's Tale," who dreams his future capture by a fox, but is reassured (falsely it turns out) by his hen-wife that dreams cannot be a valid representation of the future? If so, it is a daring analogy.

sleep can close / Thy eyelids? [V.673-4]), and tempts him in fundamentally the same terms as for Eve. If we superimpose this incident upon Adam's analysis of dreams, Satan becomes equivalent to "Fansie," rebelling against God (who becomes equivalent to "Reason") by trying to "imitate" divinity through the creation of an alternative dream-world, thus causing both faculties' "Wilde work," or war in Heaven. In Blake's revised account, however, Urizen (as Satan) plots to withdraw to the North, just as Milton's Satan rightfully possesses "The Quarters of the North" (V.688); Satan's unnamed "subordinate" becomes Luvah, man's emotional/sexual energy; and Albion (as God) is not Milton's inviolate figure but rather a "dark sleeper" (I.22.10) already weeping over his "secret pain" which later flash-backs reveal as a narcissistic dream-enamourment of Vala, or Satan's Sin. But whereas Milton separates Eve's dream from its reflections backward to Satan's rebellion and forward to her actual sin, Blake fuses Albion's dream with his actual Fall.

To be sure, Eve remains innocent until her disobedience in Book IX; for "Evil into the mind of God or Man / May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave / No spot or blame behind" (V.117-19). But the <u>déjà-vu</u>

dream atmosphere which envelops her actual temptation is transferred from Book V. The heart of Paradise Lost lies in Eve's dream. As such it is only the most explicit paradigm of a dream engulfing its dreamer, causing the prolongation of an inner world which destroys its outer analogue (Eden), forcing the narrative to become submerged onto a psychic plane synonymous with fallen human history. Significantly, after sinning Adam and Eve fall into "grosser sleep / Bred of unkindly fumes, with conscious dreams / Encumberd" (IX.1049-51).

The second major influence of Paradise Lost upon The Four Zoas is its utilization of dual perceptual levels which transform but do not negate each other. Blake begins with man trapped in fallen space and time, and only reaches his Eternal level through these limitations. In his later revisions he returned to splice the Eternal level upon his original narrative at crucial junctures, so that Vala operates simultaneously with The Four Zoas. Paradise Lost alternates the omniscient and omnipresent perspectives of Heaven with the solipsistic ones of Hell and earth, thereby illustrating the limitations of human perception.

The Godhead represents the obverse of all other levels, the fulcrum behind apparent events. Hence when Uriel returns with the news of Satan's rebellion, he "found / Already known what he for news had thought" (VI.19-20); and when Jesus asks to be man's interpreter, God answers "all thy request was my Decree" (XI.47). For Blake too, the redemption of man is implicit even before he falls: "Thy pity is from the foundations of the world and thy Redemption / Begun already in Eternity" (VIII.104.15-16). These dual levels of narrative intersect, causing each to be revealed in a new light which would be impossible if either existed alone. The tragedy of the post-lapsarian level is yet permeated with God's ultimate mercy; the resulting felix culpa is not a reversal of the Fall, but rather the Fall perceived as a totality from the divine perspective. Thus what seems negative turns out to be ultimately beneficial. For example, the reader is horrified by the sadistic figure of Death in Book X "snuff[ing] the smell / Of mortal change on Earth" (X.272-3); but God explains later that "I provided Death; so Death becomes / His [man's] final remedie" (XI.61-2), for otherwise man's immortal nature would cause an endless "living Death" (X.788). Blake's upper level provides this same transformation of seemingly chaotic events, acting as a commentary

upon the main dream-narrative. To take but one example: Urizen's exploration of his ruined world in Night VI is perhaps the most bitterly pessimistic section of the poem; yet the Eternal level assures the reader that Urizen is "By Providence divine conducted not bent from his own will / Lest Death Eternal should be the result" (74.31-2).

The obvious analogue to this dual interpretation of events in Paradise Lost is personified within the poet Milton himself, who works as an imaginative historian reconstituting events which have already occurred but nevertheless remain mysterious enough to transliterate both in their supposed original sense and their contemporary manifestation. Once again Milton's stance as poet becomes analogous to God's as creator: though the 'plot' is foreknown, the reader's dramatic suspense is in no way mitigated but rather increases through the seemingly irreconcilable paradox of free will versus determination. Milton's resolution of this problem in an esthetic sense--Satan slowly focuses on earth, and Eve through her dream inevitably approaches her actual Fall--marks its resolution in an ideological one. Technically, Milton meshes his two levels by oscillating back and forth from the terrestrial and diabolical perspectives to the divine, frequently through a simple "Mean while."

But he emphasizes that God's word is synonymous with its effect, as at the creation of the earth:

> So spake th'Almighty, and to what he spake
> His Word, the Filial Godhead, gave effect.
> Immediat are the Acts of God, more swift
> Than time or motion, but to human ears
> Cannot without process of speech be told,
> So told as earth by notion can receive.
> (VII.174-79)

Ideally, the structure of both poems demands simultaneous perspectives: but (as noted above) they are limited by the linear structure of language which places one word after another in a causal relationship. Therefore Milton was forced to use what Blake terms "Divine Analogy" (Jer.4.85.7), constructing invisible spiritual forms upon elaborate metaphorical bases only to destroy those bases. A prime example is how Milton utilizes classical mythology. His epic is filled with what Blake disparaged as "the rattle traps of Mythology" (PA 19);[13] but these pantheons are usually invalidated by their placement within a negative context or spurious rhetoric. Blake carries the process radically further by abandoning most overt classical allusions altogether --a startling new development for the epic.

[13] See also 'Preface' to Milton (I): "Shakspeare & Milton were both curbd by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword."

The Four Zoas solves Milton's difficulty in portraying dual yet simultaneous levels by the use of three extraordinary techniques. (1) It fragments time and space to an extent unparalleled in English literature, forcing the reader to abandon his expectations and to experience instead a welter of conflicting images which must be laboriously sifted through repeated readings. Milton exposes the fallacies of the fallen world through a similar mélange of specious logic (e.g., the Devils' speeches and Adam and Eve's quarrels) corrected by his own authorial voice and by God's almost documentative logic which acts as a contrast and correlative.[14] But Blake's poem puts a far greater strain--and responsibility--upon the reader.

[14] Cf. Stanley Eugene Fish's brilliant analysis of this technique in Surprised by Sin: the Reader in Paradise Lost (1967). Blake models the fragmented sophistries of his fallen Zoas (often conveyed through beautiful but contextually corrupt lyrics) upon the same seductive dramatic voices of Milton's Devils, forcing the reader to extricate the Eternal meaning behind the dream-illusion. For example, Milton's Satan "scoff[s] in ambiguous words" (VI.568); Los utters "Ambiguous words blasphemous filled with envy firm resolvd / On hate Eternal" (IV.53.26-7). Fish's description of Paradise Lost applies even more aptly to The Four Zoas: "The poem is a profoundly disturbing experience which produces something akin to a neurosis; the natural inclination to read on vies with a fear of repeating old errors and encountering new frustrations. In this, the poem is a microcosm of the world and the difficulties of reading are to be equated with the difficulties of the earthly pilgrimage" (p. 207).

(2) Blake interjects his Eternal level much more abruptly into the main narrative as a vision constantly available to the fallen protagonists if they could but perceive it. This is particularly done through the image of Christ descending in Luvah's robes of blood, hovering above the narrative but not perceived as an historical excrescence until the Apocalypse:

> And after the flames appeers the Cloud of
> the Son of Man
> Descending from Jerusalem with power and
> great Glory
> All nations look up to the Cloud & behold him
> who was crucified
> (IX.123.27-29)

Blake's revisions are not haphazard, as has been maintained by almost all critics, but link imagistically and conceptually to both sides of the narrative into which they are placed. Yet because the fallen 'lower' level is so deliberately chaotic, causing the poetic idiom to disintegrate to a far greater degree than in Milton (it seems incongruous for his Devils to speak in lyrical flowing verse while they writhe in agony), the immediate effect is one of impenetrability, a suspension of causality. I suggest, however, that the same unstable structure is present in Paradise Lost, to a lesser yet more blatant degree. (3) Blake alternates text with iconographic design, forcing the reader to utilize both eye and ear, thus permitting

a greater synthesis.[15]

The third major parallel between Paradise Lost and The Four Zoas occurs in Milton's descriptions of the Angels' perceptions duplicated to a lesser degree in Adam and Eve's senses and in the fallen artist. Blake was clearly indebted to Milton's pneumatology in order to depict the powerfully mobile but distorted senses of his fallen Zoas and the Daughters of Beulah. Raphael explains to Adam that though Angels are pure spirit, thinking intuitively rather than discursively, they yet contain "within them every lower facultie / Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste" (V.410-11). Thomas R. Frosch's excellent study of the renovation of the body in Blake's poetry points out that the Apocalypse in all three of Blake's epics does not phase out the body but, on the contrary, strengthens and at the same time synesthesizes each of the senses. Frosch states:

> It is again a decisive Blakean theme that everything in Albion's unfallen existence survives the fall in diminished form and, consequently, that the apocalypse is a development of potentialities that are with us now.[16]

[15] It is quite possible that in our own time Blake might have been attracted to parallel motion photography which utilizes multiple simultaneous frames, such as used by Truffaut.

[16] The Awakening of Albion (1974), p. 166.

This evolution of the senses from a fallen to spiritual form, without losing their human base, is described at length by Milton also. His Angels' hearing is exquisite, conveyed through repeated descriptions of angelic choirs using a variety of instruments which the reader hears behind the narrative action--harmonious in the Eternal state, discordant in the fallen. The same musical timbres form a constant background to Blake's poem.[17] Their vision is ductile: Uriel showing Satan the earth from far in space focuses upon Eden and even distinguishes Adam's Bower. Blake's Orc possesses the same microscopic and telescopic sight: "His eyes the lights of his large soul contract or else expand / Contracted they behold the secrets of the infinite mountains . . . / Expanded they behold the terrors of the Sun & Moon" (V.61. 18-19, 22). Their taste is decidedly gourmet, as evidenced by Milton's humorous description of a meal shared with Raphael, followed by Raphael's discourse on angelic digestive processes. For Milton as for Blake, touch is equated with sexuality: "The sense of touch whereby mankind / Is propagated" (VIII.579-80).

[17] See Catherine Findley Smith, "Pictoral Language in The Four Zoas by Blake," Diss. Univ. of N. Carolina, 1972. Smith analyzes the aural effects of each Night, concluding that their massive influx, combined with visual and kinesthetic imagery, forces the reader to nonverbal and indeed childlike conceptualization.

It can become distorted into lust, as Adam and Eve's copulation following their Fall ("In Lust they burn" [IX.1015]: the heatless light of the Godhead has changed into the lightless heat of Hell), or transformed into angelic sexuality at once evanescent yet tactile:[18]

> Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
> (And pure thou wert created) wee enjoy
> In eminence, and obstacle find none
> Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive barrs:
> Easier than Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,
> Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure
> Desiring.
> (VIII.622-28)

Certainly this passage must have influenced Jerusalem's description of purified sexuality: "For in the Sanctuary of Eden . . . / Embraces are cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet, / And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place" (3.69.43-4). The same fusion is also attained in the Apocalypse when each Zoa reunites with his Emanation: "Joy thrilld thro all the Furious form of Tharmas humanizing / Mild he Embracd her whom he sought he raisd her thro the heavens" (IX.132.36-37). A further parallel occurs in the Angels' ability to assume the male, female or hermaphroditic sex: "For Spirits when they please / Can either Sex assume, or both, so soft /

[18] Robert H. West, in Milton and the Angels (Athens, Georgia, 1955), remarks that Milton's descriptions of Angels making love are totally original. "The fact is that Christian angelogists simply did not speculate on even the possibility that angels embraced each other" (p. 171).

And uncompounded is thir Essence pure" (I.423-5). Blake may be alluding to this passage in Jerusalem again, where "Man in the Resurrection changes his sexual Garments at will" (3.61.51). But in both Milton and Blake, sexual mobility can become distorted. In The Four Zoas the state of Satan takes the outward form of a hermaphrodite "hiding the Male / Within as in a Tabernacle Abominable" (VIII.101.36-7): Blake seems to be alluding to the sexually perverse hybrids assumed by Milton's Devils in Book I, who contaminate institutionalized religion--"within his [God's] Sanctuary it self thir Shrines, / Abominations" (387-8). Even Milton's Freudian nightmare Sin, serpentine from the waist down, becomes transformed into Blake's Enion, who after coitus changes into "Half woman & half beast" (I.7.4).[19]

These permutations are made possible in Paradise Lost by the ductile nature of angelic morphology which can take any shape desired. Thus Satan assumes the guise of a "stripling Cherube" (III.636) to fool Uriel, and upon entering Eden (as a mist) passes through

[19] Blake's illustration for MS p. 7, where these lines occur, completes the link to Milton's Sin by indicating the precise nature of Enion's bestial transformation: a long, convoluted snake's tail.

various animal forms before centering within a toad and later serpent. Blake's Zoas too retain vestiges of their Eternal ability to metamorphose; but in the fallen state this serves only to exacerbate their fragmentation. Los attempting to bind Urizen is mimetically absorbed into Urizen's evolutionary and embryonic changes: "his iron sinews bend like lead & fold / Into unusual forms dancing & howling stamping the Abyss" (IV.55.29). In the dream locale of Blake's poem, these nightmarish <u>phantasma</u> stemming from Albion's splintered psyche are the rule rather than the exception. For the longer the dream absorbs its sleeper, the more malignant it becomes. The Spectre of Urthona admits to Tharmas, "how are we alterd our beauty decayd" (IV.49.27). This loss of lucid human form is a reflection of the Zoas' prior loss of psychic integrity: "For as the person is so is his life proportiond" (IX.120.31). The literary analogue which Blake invokes here is Satan and the Devils' deterioration from their former angelic beauty. Satan's own final brutalization occurs most dramatically when he returns to Hell to announce his presumed victory, but changes into a dragon; Blake parallels this incident explicitly in Night VIII, where Urizen's final form before the Apocalypse becomes a furious

dragon.[20] In fact Milton's enunciation of the principle whereby such metamorphosis can occur--"for what they saw, they felt themselves now changing" (X.540)--becomes one of Blake's celebrated axioms: "he became what he beheld / He became what he was doing he was himself transformd" (IV.55.22-3).

The angelic ability to penetrate matter is equivalent to the poet's ability to enter his own created forms and yet remain separate. Its purest manifestation for Milton is God, who by creating the universe pervades it to such a homogeneous degree that he can only be discovered through his creations. On a slightly lower level, the same kenosis is personified in Jesus' incarnation into human form without shedding divinity, just as Blake's Christ becomes incarnate within Luvah, and Luvah within Orc, a phenomenon inexplicable to Urizen's rationalism. The fallen Angels utilize this skill for profane ends, causing their deterioration into animal and inanimate forms. Now such a technique is unique to the traditional dream-vision poem with its permutations through varied and often grotesque forms, and it is the fundamental structural principle which undergirds The Four Zoas. It permits Blake

[20] See Bloom, "Commentary," The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. Erdman (Garden City, N. Y., 1965; rpt. 1970), p. 881.

the metamorphosis his personae undergo, passing literally through each other in sexual "torments of Love & Jealousy" (I.1) only to become reborn as derivative avatars possessing even less memory of their origin, yet hungering for that unity and resuscitating it briefly through flashbacks. What we might term the 'dream protoplasm' of Milton's Angels cannot be dissolved by death, though the fallen Devils, Satan, and Adam and Eve after sin all long for extinction as a release from the rigours of immortality. In the same way practically every character in The Four Zoas at one time seeks death as a release from an exquisitely developed sense of self, but finds that suicide and murder are but variants of self-mutilation: first, because nothing can ever be destroyed, in Blake's sense, but a "negation" which does not exist as a minute particularity but rather is an abstractive "dream of Ulro"; and second, because everything which occurs in the poem's dream is ultimately first-person singular. Examples of these micro-deaths can be seen on almost every page of Blake's poem, from Enion's "Farewell I die" (I.5.5), to Urizen's absorptions into the elements and his equally agonizing resurrections in Night VI, to Vala who is torn to pieces by Orc and yet "joyd in all the Conflict" (VIIB.93.23)--her ashes at the end

of Night VIII once again animate. It seems probable that this inability to die, symbolizing the doomed circularity of historic concepts occurring century after century, was influenced by Milton's angelology. The Zoas discover that death per se is impossible in their dream; they merely change into something else, which inevitably gravitates back toward the same false perspective which generated the change in the first place.

The only genuine salvation from such a deadlock, for Blake, becomes total "Self annihilation" (VIIA.85. 34), differing from suicide (as, for example, Tharmas particularly seeks death throughout the poem) in that it requires acceptance of the most hideous aspects of selfhood, or the embrace of one's Spectre. When this definitively occurs--at a pitch of desperation such as the ending of Night VIIA--then a dialectical breakthrough is achieved because the formulated self is discovered not in fact to exist: i.e., the Spectres "consume" in the mental flames of the Apocalypse. It is significant that Milton allows his fallen Angels only one recourse to escape their pain of selfhood: they "cannot but by annihilating die" (VI.347). Blake submits Milton himself to this very process in plate 14 of Milton.

The fourth major influence of Paradise Lost upon The Four Zoas is its locale. Blake combines Milton's descriptions of Hell, war in Heaven, Chaos and post-lapsarian Eden into a single wasteland upheld by the fractured perceptions of the battling Zoas. Surely it is not coincidental that these four locations are each representative of an element which Blake associates with a Zoa: Hell (fire: Luvah, particularly in his fiery manifestation as Orc); Heaven (air: Urizen, who subsumes the war between God and Satan into a single entity); Chaos (water: Tharmas, struggling to attain human shape but collapsing back into organic decay); and Eden (earth: Urthona, particularly in his manifestation as Los/Adam and Enitharmon/Eve). In Blake, these are four major ways in which a single Fall is manifested--four fissures through Albion's body; but though the same structure is implicit in Paradise Lost, Milton does not exploit its implications.

When Satan rouses the Devils from "slumber on that fiery Couch" (I.377), his summons "Awake, arise or be for ever fall'n" (330) is later repeated in Eve's dream. Eve's unnaturally prolonged sleep with its distorted dream-world is actually a reflection

of the fallen Angels' torpor when the poem opens, "benumm[ed]" by "the sleepy drench / Of that forgetful Lake" (II.73-4). Milton refers to this parallel only obliquely;[21] but Blake utilizes it explicitly in Urizen, who following his Fall enters a "stoned stupor . . . a dreamful horrible State" (IV.52.20-1) where Los attempts to bind him in chains, just as Satan is chained on the burning lake which Milton links to amnesiac sleep. Upon waking, the Devils explore Hell, as does Urizen his dens. The environment they encounter is immediately recognizable as the barren desert of most of The Four Zoas with its alternation between Urizen's frigid ice and Orc's torrid heat:

> through many a dark and drearie Vale
> They passd, and many a Region dolorous,
> Ore many a Frozen, many a Fierie Alpe,
> Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and
> shades of death,
> A Universe of death, which God by curse
> Created evil, for evil onely good,
> Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds,
> Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things
> Abominable, inutterable, and worse
> Than Fables yet have feigned, or fear conceiv'd.
> (II.618-27)

This is the same negative dream landscape which Chaucer momentarily encountered and recoiled from, the treacherous terrain through which Bunyan's pilgrims

[21] Joseph Summers, in The Muse's Method (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), rightly maintains that "The actions and the conversations of the Devils' speeches often possess the reality as well as the absurdity of nightmares or madness" (p. 41).

progress, and the desert where Jesus is tempted in Paradise Regain'd (once again through dreams). Like the "Universe of Death & Decay" (IV.48.5) of Blake's poem, it is an inversion of reality, personifying the "misjoining shapes, / Wilde work" (V.111-12) which Adam detected in Eve's dream. Its anomalies which Milton claims have been undepicted by classical literature are given full embodiment not in Paradise Lost but rather in Blake's world of Generation in The Four Zoas.

So the locale of Blake's poem is to be equated with Milton's Hell. But in addition Blake extends two further aspects. First, he identifies Milton's fiery Hell directly with man's normal state. Milton begins unorthodoxically with Hell as a fixed location distant from earth; but Satan's project--"Earth with Hell / To mingle and involve" (II.383-4)--is fulfilled by causing man's Fall: "Hell and this World, one Realm, one Continent / Of easie through-fare" (X.371-2). Satan's flight through Chaos builds a bridge behind him over which Sin and Death cross, ultimately wedding Hell with earth; it is probable this is the origin for Urizen's Web of Religion secreted behind him to contaminate everything through which he passes.[22]

[22] A further reason for suggesting this influence (and its ironic inversion) is that Urizen, trailing his Web, journeys through Chaos; and Bloom (op. cit., p. 875)

rightly reminds us that "The pattern of Night VI is provided by Satan's journey through Chaos in Paradise Lost II, with the important difference that Satan seeks an escape from Hell, while Urizen surveys what have become his dens."

Thus the structure of Paradise Lost hoodwinks the reader by first depicting an inhuman Hell in a remote corner of the universe, with man apparently still uncreated, then transplanting the first two books into the historical contamination viewed by Adam in the final two books. What for Milton is a gradual process becomes for Blake immediate, since Hell as a state is implicit within fallen man and has no existence otherwise.[23]

Second, Blake follows Milton in conceiving of Hell as a mental state. Though apprehensible to the senses as an apparently inviolate physical locality --in many respects it is the acme of materialism, viewing creation as a prison--it yet remains unreal, a projection of the deluded (for Blake, dreaming) mind:

> for within him Hell
> He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
> One step no more than from himself can fly
> By change of place.
> (IV.20-3)

[23] See Blake's early annotation to Lavater (Erdman, p. 579): "mark that I do not believe there is such a thing literally [i.e., as Hell]. but hell is the being shut up in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man. for all life is holy."

> The mind is its own place, and in it self
> Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
> (I.254-5)

Such is precisely what happens: Heaven becomes Hell to Satan before he is actually evicted; and Hell becomes Heaven to fallen man who yet may work his way back to grace. In both Milton and Blake these two modalities can co-exist, their separate worlds intersecting and flowing through each other, occasionally quite oblivious of the other's presence. Thus, for example, the Just Man in Adam's final vision can reside in the midst of evil without it being aware of his existence; or, conversely, Satan carries his own internal Hell into Eden, passing through a chain of animals without contaminating them. Inevitably, however, this plurality of perspectives causes conflict. The mental origin of physical form reaches its zenith as a structural principle in the dream framework of The Four Zoas where each Zoa, writes Helen T. McNeil, "creates his own imperatives and then suffers from them absolutely, as if the tyranny were external."[24]

There are several occasions in Paradise Lost where violence threatens to expand to an intolerable degree,

[24] "The Formal Art of The Four Zoas," Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, ed. Erdman & Grant (Princeton, 1970), p. 382.

bringing both the Godhead and Milton's rigid theological structure under tension. One such point is when Satan and Gabriel assume their true shapes to challenge each other, like game-cocks:

> but the Starrie Cope
> Of Heav'n perhaps, or all the Elements
> At least had gone to rack, disturbd and torne
> With violence of this conflict, had not soon
> Th'Eternal to prevent such horrid fray . . .
> (IV.992-96)

Only God as <u>deus ex machina</u> prevents the elements from disintegrating. Total disjunction is again almost reached when the same two antagonistic principles battle in Heaven: both good and evil Angels start ripping Paradise apart, uprooting mountains, conducting literal underground warfare, their "Nectarous humor" (VI.332) afterwards healing, for all the world like hideously efficient troops of ants. Their robotic warfare is evocative of modern technological war; indeed, the Devils invent cannon ("hollow Engins long and round / Thick-rammd, at th'other bore with touches of fire" [VI.484-5ff.]), just as does Urizen conducting the same battle ("brass & molten metals cast in hollow globes and bor'd / Tubes in petrific steel" [VIII.100.29-30]). Once again conflict threatens to disrupt its frame of reference and veer out of control back to anarchy:

> horid confusion heapt
> Upon Confusion rose: and now all Heav'n
> Had gone to wrack, with ruin overspred,
> Had not th'Almightie Father . . .
> (VI.668-71)

Only Milton's arbitrary intrusions of God save his own theological and poetic frame from collapsing beneath the forces it brings into collision. It is at these junctures that Paradise Lost wavers upon the internalized warfare to which Blake commits his own concepts, personae and poetic idiom. "Whence in perpetual fight they needs must last / Endless, and no solution will be found" (VI.693-4): such is the situation in Blake's "wars of Death Eternal" (I.21.15).[25]

Milton's wounded Angels heal immediately, and the outcome of their battle is foreknown by God. This tends to negate the heroic connotations of war which the classical epic espoused, and Milton uses it for this purpose (see proem to Book IX). But it also forces the narrative to become at least partially internalized, creating ideological rather than corporeal war. Yet Milton never submits God to this struggle, but portrays him as merely chuckling behind the action.

[25] Blake uses the image of reversed wheels throughout The Four Zoas to depict the fallen state, e.g., "But perverse rolld the wheels of Urizen & Luvah back reversd / Downwards & outwards consuming in the wars of Eternal Death" (I.20.14-15). He is probably alluding to Milton's use of the same image in Satan's war against God in Heaven: "Arms on Armour clashing brayd / Horrible discord, and the madding Wheeles / Of brazen Chariots rag'd" (VI.209-11).

Blake recognizes that the conflict between moral good and evil portrayed in Paradise Lost cannot be resolved on its own terms because it is man (i.e., Milton) battling against his own faculties:

> He could not take their fetters off for they grew from the soul
> Nor could he quench the fires for they flamd out from the heart
> Nor could he calm the Elements because himself was Subject
> (VI.71.11-13)

These lines describing Urizen's dilemma apply equally to Milton. Victory of one polarity over another but causes imminent collapse of the organic being (Albion) who is the field of action. This greater collapse bleeds away energy from its constituent parts; hence the victor causes his own disintegration. Though Milton's "Intestin War" (VI.259) almost shatters Heaven, emptying it of one-third of its inhabitants, Satan is ultimately treated as but a straw-dog:

> [Satan] fell like Lightning down from Heav'n,
> Prince of the Aire; then rising from his Grave
> Spoild Principalities and Powers, triumphd
> In op'n shew.
> (X.184-7)

We are now in the specific locale of Night I of The Four Zoas, whose epigram from Ephesians 6.12, to which Milton alludes above, reads: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." But the difference, for Blake, is that

by ejecting his emanative self (she [Ahania] fell like lightning"[III.43.24]--Blake uses the same simile as Milton), Urizen/God incurs his own immediate Fall, and thereby becomes himself a ruler of darkness:

> As when the thunderbolt down falleth on the
> appointed place
> Fell down down rushing ruining thundering
> shuddering
> Into the Caverns of the Grave & places of
> Human Seed
> Where the impressions of Despair & Hope
> enroot forever
> A World of Darkness. Ahania fell far
> into Nonentity
> . . . .
> Then Urizen & all his hosts in curst despair
> down rushing
> (III.44.1-5, 13)

A further focus of conflict is Milton's most rudimentary: Chaos. Satan's project to establish the opposite of God through all levels of creation seeks to reduce earth "to her original darkness . . . and once more / Erect the Standerd there of ancient Night" (II.984-6). Such Chaos represents the loss of order which we have seen the poem swerving toward before:

> a dark
> Illimitable Ocean without bound,
> Without dimension, where length, bredth, and heighth
> And time and place are lost; where eldest Night,
> And Chaos, Ancestors of Nature, hold
> Eternal Anarchie, amidst the noise
> Of endless warrs, and by confusion stand.
> For hot, cold, moist, and dry, four Champions fierce
> Strive here for Maistrie.
> (II.892-900, my italics)

Here we are even closer to the specific location of The Four Zoas with its dream-atmosphere where three-dimensional space and time no longer apply, and its "four Champions fierce" struggle for mastery. The numerical significance of the four chaotic elements vis-à-vis the four heavenly Zoas drawing Christ's chariot in apparently undisturbed equilibrium may have occurred to Blake: how does such order co-exist with chaos, or chaos return to order? Milton terms Chaos the "formless infinite" (III.12); Blake sharpens the phrase into the "formless indefinite" (VIIB.93.27), the Margins of Nonentity into which the Emanations are drained throughout the poem, where their particularity is expunged. This is also evident in Milton's Death, whose main horror is its lack of articulated outline:

> The other shape,
> If shape it might be calld that shape had none
> Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
> Or substance might be calld that shadow seemd,
> For each seemd either.
> (II.666-70)

Blake's illustration for this incident in Paradise Lost, "Satan, Sin, and Death," depicts Death as a darkly transparent figure through which the background is visible.[26] Wittreich points out that most 18th-century

[26] Reproduced, along with comparative designs by Stothard, Barry and Fuseli, in Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake (1959; rpt. 1974), plates 10a-11a.

illustrators depicted Death as a rigid skeleton, but Blake was an exception: "Alone among eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century illustrators of Milton, Blake preserved Milton's conception of Death as a shadow."[27] The concept was important to him for it reveals the mental void which is man's greatest enemy, linked to his own image of the Spectre which is often termed a "Shadow," and also illustrates the dreamlike quality of Milton's poem.[28]

Ostensibly, The Four Zoas would seem to begin where Paradise Lost ends, with Adam and Eve evicted from Eden, the "temperate Clime" (XII.635) beginning to parch, and the Eastern Gate closed by fiery Angels, just as Blake closes Luvah's eastern gate into an emotional void (VI.74.19, 20). But such a view is too simplistic, ignoring Milton's modulation of tense which specifies fallen man as the major active protagonist throughout the poem. The first two books' depiction of what seems to be a solely diabolical Hell, with

[27] Op. cit., p. 94.

[28] Joseph Addison, in the Spectator (No. 315), objecting to Milton's portrayal of "imaginary Persons in Chaos," inadvertently indicated the strength of the poem if considered as dream-vision: "These Passages are astonishing, but not credible; the Reader cannot so far impose upon himself as to see a Possibility in them; they are the Descriptions of Dreams and Shadows, not of Things or Persons."

man as yet uncreated, is yet capable at any single point of expanding its reference to implicate the entire range of human history up to and including Milton's contemporary England. Thus, for example, the fallen Devils are in a strict sense nameless, having lost their heavenly identity and not yet gained their terrestrial notoriety (see I.361-75); but Milton condenses time and space by giving a synopsis of each one's future acts. Belial's erotic contamination is at once inward-directed, causing his own sepsis, yet outward-directed upon future man--the transition is so subtle, we do not realize we have been transferred into the present tense:

> In Courts and Palaces he also Reigns
> And in luxurious Cities, where the noise
> Of riots ascends above thir loftiest Towrs,
> And injury and outrage: And when Night
> Darkens the Streets, then wander forth the Sons
> Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
> (I.497-502)

Milton might be listening through his own window. A similar 'flash-forward' occurs in the Paradise of Fools, empty when Satan encounters it; yet Milton describes its future population with such vividness that the reader is surprised to return 50 lines later to "now unpeopl'd, and untrod" (II.497). Milton's proems, originating from his immediate present, also serve to introduce himself as a character in his own poem. But the most significant modulation occurs in

Book X's description of the effects of sin upon the physical world. Here Milton's detailed description of the fallen seasons (651-706) parallels the same dislocated cycle in The Four Zoas (II.33.27-32). The effects of evil are manifested first in the elements, proceeding up the hierarchical chain through animals:

> Beast now with Beast gan warr, and Fowle with Fowle,
> And Fish with Fish; to graze the Herb all leaving,
> Devourd each other; nor stood much in awe
> Of Man, but fled him, or with cout'nance grim
> Glar'd on him passing.
> (X.709-13)

Such is also the external world of the fallen Zoas, caused by Urizen's curse in Night VI as it is caused by God's in Milton and Genesis. Blake portrays the same unnatural alienation between man and his "Animal forms of wisdom" (IX.138.31):

> Oft would he stand & question a fierce scorpion
> glowing with gold
> In vain the terror heard not. then a lion he
> would Seize
> By the fierce mane staying his howling course
> in vain
> (VI.71.1-3)

Though recorded history only enters both epics in their final two books/Nights (and this is a remarkable parallelism), the pre-historic and mythic events which constitute the main plot yet exist simultaneous with contemporary man. Thus, to pick but one arbitrary example, while Urizen builds his Mundane Shell in Night II, ostensibly before the creation of man in Night IV, Blake's own personal situation and time is very much

evident in the background:

> With trembling horror pale aghast the Children
> of Man
> Stood on the infinite Earth & saw these visions
> in the air
> In waters & in Earth beneath they cried to one
> another
> What are we terrors to one another. Come O
> brethren wherefore
> Was this wide Earth spread all abroad. not
> for wild beasts to roam
> But many stood silent & busied in their families
> And many said We see no Visions in the darksom air
> (II.28.11-17)

Just as Milton's God speaks of man as fallen long before the actual event occurs (e.g., III.400ff.), so the effects of that Fall are implicit throughout Milton's poem from the beginning. Hence I conclude that The Four Zoas, which traces the origin and effects of the Fall to a far greater extent, does not begin where Paradise Lost ends but rather deepens and revises Milton's entire epic.

This leads directly into the fifth and final major influence of Paradise Lost upon The Four Zoas: its dramatic personae. To begin with, the arena of action in both epics pits supratemporal and -spatial powers against each other and against the atrophied figure of man who seems decidedly out of place among such massive energies. The "Godlike shapes and forms /

Excelling human" (I.358-9) of the Devils take control of the "frail Originals" (II.375) and pervert them to their own ends. In the same manner Blake's fallen Zoas possess almost unlimited power over their environments. Their ferocity is so overwhelming, the reader feels inclined at first to distinguish them as a separate species (whose major analogue seems to be chthonic pantheons) alien to the miniscule humans who cower helplessly in the background as pawns to be manipulated. Gradually, however, one comes to discover that this dichotomy is an effect of the Fall which Blake attempts to heal. It is not that the Zoas are too enormous; rather the reader is too small. Just as the fallen Zoas are alienated from their eternal lineaments, so man (specifically the reader) suffers from an unnatural alienation from his true giant stature. In a negative sense this dichotomy between power and weakness is manifested historically as imperialism and slavery; societally, as the injustices which the grown-up may inflict upon the child ("& on the Land children are sold to trades / Of dire necessity still laboring day & night till all / Thir life extinct they took the spectre form in dark despair" [VIIB.95.26-8]); and psychologically, as the occlusion of man's visionary potential. Blake's proem specifies that the Zoas are ultimately internalized (I.3.4); thus it can equally

be said that despite man's subjugation he yet retains within himself "the hateful siege / Of contraries" (IX.121)--the phrase, significantly, is not Blake's but Milton's. If man can convert self-destructive war into integrated mental war, he becomes not "a Victim to the Living" (I.4.8) but rather a single human form divine whose home is the universe, its cataclysmic forms reclaimed as his own, containing all time and space within his body. This single ultimate focus in Blake is Albion, or man; in Milton, it is God. The difference between these two areas of emphasis is what The Four Zoas specifically cites as the Fall:

> If Gods combine against Man Setting their Dominion above
> The Human form Divine. Thrown down from their high Station
> In the Eternal heavens of Human Imagination: buried beneath
> In dark oblivion with incessant pangs ages on ages
> In Enmity & war first weakend then in stern repentance
> They must renew their brightness & their disorganizd functions
> Again reorganize till they resume the image of the human
> Cooperating in the bliss of Man obeying his Will
> Servants to the infinite & Eternal of the Human form
>
> (IX.126.9-17)

This important passage epitomizes Blake's entire poem. The process of regeneration becomes re-absorption of deities back into the human breast.

Blake vehemently disagrees with Milton's deposition

of man's rational faculties into the figure of God, and his imaginative and sexual ones into Satan. Much of the irony of The Four Zoas is lost if one does not detect its parodies of Paradise Lost, particularly Urizen's conflation of God and Satan. From the moment he is given power by collapsing Albion in Night II, Urizen exhibits the attributes of the Old Testament Jehovah, usually (but not always)[29] further specified by allusions to Milton. To maintain his divinity he surrounds himself with all the Miltonic rubric traditionally characterizing Godhead:

> Indignant muttering low thunders: Urizen descended
> Gloomy sounding. Now I am God from Eternity to Eternity
> . . .
> Ten thousand thousand were his hosts of Spirits on the wind;
> Ten thousand thousand glittering Chariots shining in the sky.
> (I.12.7-8, 32-3)

Erdman identifies the above allusion to God's wrathful appearance defeating Satan's hosts (VI.767-70);[30] but, ironically, Urizen here attempts to defeat Los, the

[29] Wittreich rightly points out (op. cit., p. xvi) that "whether developing his subjects from a biblical or a Miltonic context (and it is often difficult to separate the two), Blake invokes tradition only to subject it to radical transformation." However, the Miltonic context can usually be identified by explicit exegetical references.

[30] The Poems of William Blake, ed. Stevenson, p. 309. The full quotation from Paradise Lost reads: "Attended with ten thousand thousand Saints / He onward came, far off his coming shone; / And twentie thousand (I thir number heard) / Chariots of God."

imaginative power. Such rumbling stagecraft would be comical were it not for its malefic effects upon mankind, who mistake these illusions for reality and become enslaved by institutional Christianity as, in Blake's estimation, remained Milton. Urizen requires believers to maintain his facade; Enitharmon particularly falls an early victim to his Mosaic code, summoning him to validate her own imposition of what Blake castigates as the Female Will.

Blake subjects Milton's praise of divine creation to severe criticism by indicating how it perpetuates the conflict of rigidly moral antithesis. Witness Milton's celebrated description of God creating the earth:

> He took the gold'n Compasses, prepar'd
> In God's Eternal store, to circumscribe
> This Universe, and all created things:
> One foot he centerd, and the other turnd
> Round through the vast profunditie obscure,
> And said, Thus farr extend, thus farr thy bounds,
> This be thy just Circumference, O World.
> (VII.224-30)

Blake transfers several images from this passage into negative contexts. Urizen as the "Architect divine" (II.30.8) plies the same "golden compasses" (II.24.12)[31] to inscribe the circumference of the same frigidly

[31] Margoliouth first noted this identification, William Blake's Vala, p. 100.

beautiful Bower of Reason, which Blake associates with Milton's Hell. The centering of his compass foot later builds the arbitrary and restrictive enclosure of earth:

> Here will I fix my foot & here rebuild
> . . .to measure out the immense & fix
> The whole into another world better suited to obey
> His will where none should dare oppose his will
> himself being King
> Of all & all futurity be bound in his vast chain
> (VI.73.14, 17-20)

One further example will indicate how Blake transforms am image from Paradise Lost into its diametrically opposite meaning. When Tharmas falls into a chaotic sea at the beginning of Night I, Enion saves him from oblivion by weaving his Spectre for nine days and nights (undoubtedly a reference to Milton's Devils "rowling in the fiery Gulfe" for "Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night" [I.52, 50]). Their cumulative Fall causes the earth to emerge:

> Round rolld the Sea Englobing in a watry Globe
> self balancd
> (I.5.25)

This single line coalesces Milton's description of the creation of earth from chaos (I have italicized the two key words):

> [God] downward purg'd
> The black tartareous cold infernal dregs
> Adverse to life: then founded, then conglob'd
> Like things to like, the rest to several place
> Disparted, and between spun out the Air,
> And Earth self-ballanc't on her Centre hung.
> (VII.239-44)

For Milton the occasion is a joyful manifestation of God's omnipotence; for Blake, a necessary but poignant limitation of the Fall, the first in a series of terrifying intermediate stages through which man must pass before he returns to true creativity which does not conglobe but rather emanates.

Blake further undercuts Milton's God by including the attributes of Satan within Urizen. Both display the same power-drive, Manichean reasoning, and sexual sterility combined with prurience. Urizen sublimates his internal conflict into external destruction--"if perhaps he might avert / His own despair even at the cost of every thing that breathes" (VII.102.22-3); Milton's Satan manifests the same tendency--"For onely in destroying I finde ease / To my relentless thoughts" (IX.129-30). Both poets regard violence as a reflection of sexual frustration: for Blake, "war is energy Enslavd" (IX.120.42); for Milton's Devils, homicide is "lust hard by hate" (I.417). Urizen envies Los and Enitharmon's sexual vitality (II.34.5); Satan envies Adam and Eve's (IV.502-04). Urizen is tormented by the memory of his rebellion against Albion, and unable to live in the present--"Thro Chaos seeking for delight & in spaces remote / Seeking the Eternal which is always present to the wise" (IX.121.9-10); Satan is tormented by the memory of his rebellion against God, and journeys

through Chaos "not hoping to escape, but shun / The present" (X.377-8). Urizen's usurpation of power only makes him "alone in misery supreme" (IX.121.17); Satan likewise becomes "onely supream / In miserie" (IV.91-2). Urizen laments his "faded radiance" (I.16.16) in "dark delusions of repentence" (VIII.107.18), such as the poignant lament concluding Night V; Satan indulges in the same futile self-recriminations, such as his speech on Mt. Euphrates. In Night II, Urizen and his sons mine the ore of what seems to be a heavenly terrain, and build a golden palace in which to worship sexual idols; Satan and his angels mine the ore of what is clearly a diabolical terrain, and build the golden temple of Pandemonium where the same sexually contaminated religion is instituted.[32]

By subsuming God and Satan into Urizen, Blake traces the Fall back to the scriptural and Miltonic depiction of Jehovah as a moralistic despot. But his technique also serves to redeem both figures by forcing them to coexist. This re-absorption of God back into his own fallen creation in order to be taught by it is a prototype for what in Milton becomes the poet Milton plunging back into the fallen form of his poem

[32] See Margoliouth, op. cit., p. 100.

in order to revise it and himself. Urizen, to be sure, seems the last to admit the polar relationship between his dual selves. Only the Apocalypse forces him to comprehend that his impossible drive toward abstract holiness itself causes sin. Urizen recognizes this self-contradiction at a deep level, but is afraid to accept the alternative which seems to be chaos. He prefers a rigid moral structure to the fluid anarchy of the other Zoas and of untraditional poetic form. When he does finally accept flux in Night IX, his return to human form marks Blake's revision of Milton's God: forcing God, in effect, to renounce his self-proclaimed divinity and become a simple plowman in a communal family.

There is a further dimension here, and that is Blake's liberation of Milton's Satan, paralleling his liberation of God. The worst aspects of Satan are parodied in Urizen; but his positive qualities are manifested in "the immortal demon" (V.61.5), Orc. Orc exhibits ambivalent elements throughout the poem; yet it is clear that Blake revives in him his distinction of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that the flames of Hell are positive, particularly sexual energy which man attempts to repress:[33]

[33] The Marriage's promise to print "in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, & displaying the infinite which was hid" (pl.14) certainly alludes to the "corrosive Fires" (I.401) of Paradise Lost's Hell.

His limbs bound down mock at his chains for
over them a flame
Of circling fire unceasing plays to feed them
with life . . .
His bosom is like starry heaven expanded all
the stars
Sing round. there waves the harvest & the vintage
rejoices. the Springs
Flow into rivers of delight. there the
spontaneous flowers
Drink laugh & sing. the grasshopper the Emmet
& the Fly
The golden Moth builds there a house & spreads
her silken bed
His loins inwove with silken fires are like
a furnace fierce.
(V.61.11-12, 27-32)

Here Blake conflates the powerful majesty of Milton's Satan in Hell with the unfallen potential of Adam and Eve, the redeemed body with its contracting and expanding powers, clarified vision, spontaneity, "radiant Youth" (IX.121.32) and apocalyptic sensuality. Though chained like Satan on a lake of fire, Orc's "Cavernd Universe of flaming fire" (VIIA.77.6) is condemned by Blake not for its fiery content but rather its constriction. Los' binding of Orc in Night V is evidently a reference to the poet (specifically Milton) binding his own imagination into the rejected form of Satan. Though Los repents and later attempts to release Orc, he finds his Chain of Jealousy "wrapping round the Centre [i.e., axis mundi] & the limbs / Of Orc entering with fibres" (V.63.2-3). That is, Milton's poetic error has become consolidated into a social form by Blake's time, particularly as exemplified by Puritanism, and cannot simply be reversed through sheer effort.

The confrontation between Urizen and Orc which now occurs (in Night VIIA) is again not fully appreciated until it is placed within its intended Miltonic context as an interrogation between God and Satan. Urizen views Orc's energy as wholly negative:

> Image of dread whence are thou whence is this most woful place
> Whence these fierce fires but from thyself No other living thing
> In all this Chasm I behold. No other living thing
> Dare thy most terrible wrath abide Bound here to waste in pain
> Thy vital substance in these fires that issue new & new
> Around thee sometimes like a flood & sometimes like a rock
> Of living pangs thy horrible bed glowing with ceaseless fires
> (VIIA.78.17-23)

Clearly this is Milton's Hell of Books I-II, with a vengeance.[34] Yet at the same time it is Hell as Urizen--and, by extension, Milton's autocratic and vindictive God--perceives the sexual and revolutionary energy of Orc as cited in the previous quotation from Night V. As the Marriage puts it, hellfire is actually "the enjoyments of Genius; which to Angels look like torment & insanity" (pl.5). Furthermore, Orc turns

[34] See particularly Paradise Lost II.434-41, which describes Hell as a "huge convex of Fire" with closed gates, literally a prison. It is usually suggested that Blake derived his image of the fallen body as a cavern from Plato, but it is equally probable that Milton is a source. Two other images which Blake repeatedly uses to describe fallen existence, the maze and the labyrinth, are also used for the same purpose in Paradise Lost (see II.561, X.830-1, IX.183).

the tables by pointing out that Urizen/God lives in a far more horrific Hell:

> Yet my fierce fires are better than thy snows
> Shuddring thou sittest
> Thou art not chaind Why shouldst thou sit cold
> grovelling demon of woe
> In tortures of dire coldness now a Lake of
> waters deep
> Sweeps over thee freezing to solid still thou
> sitst closd up
> In that transparent rock as if in joy of thy
> bright prison
> Till overburdend with its own weight drawn out
> thro immensity
> With a crash breaking across the horrible mass
> comes down
> (VIIA.79.2-3)

Here we are given an adumbrated version of the Fall, with God a lugubrious "demon of woe" collapsing beneath the sterile illusion of his own sanctity. The bright, architectonic landscape of Night II is now seen for what it is, a prison. Urizen cannot sustain such acute criticism, and attempts to escape by unleashing one of his stock Jehovah tantrums. But Orc's diabolical energy must be reabsorbed back into Albion and, by extension, Milton. Blake even parodies Milton's birth of Sin from Satan's head, giving it a positive function to wake the sleepers of the poem: "bursting from his [Orc's] troubled head with terrible visages & flaming hair / His swift winged daughters sweep across the vast black ocean" (VIIA.77.25-6).[35]

[35] Given this consistent identification of Orc with the fiend, it seems probable that Orc's Oedipal aspects are at least partially derived from Milton's Death, whose violent birth from and rape of his mother Sin

("breaking violent way / Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain / Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew / Transformd" [II.782-5]) becomes equated with Orc's equally violent birth from and enamourment of Enitharmon ("from her heart rending his way a terrible Child sprang forth / In thunder smoke & sullen flames & howlings & fury & blood" [V.58.17-18]). Orc rapes his mother by proxy through the prototypal harlot, Vala. The "fiery dogs" (VIIB.95.9) rising around him, which Margoliouth confesses himself at a loss to identify (op. cit., p. 140) are obviously a reference to Milton's "Hell Hounds" (II.654-9) surrounding Sin's waist, begotten by her mating with Death.

The temptation scene of Night VIIA brings Blake's criticism of Milton to a climax by a series of dazzling reversals. Blake seizes upon an anomaly which seems not to have bothered Milton, that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil originates from God in the first place, and therefore God by containing moral antinomies within himself has, in a sense, already fallen.[36] Urizen becomes trapped by the root of Mystery which grows beneath his feet whenever he tries to position himself.[37] In Paradise Lost Satan accuses God of being

[36] Such a view but develops the implications of Genesis 3.22: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil."

[37] Margoliouth (op. cit., p. 134) draws attention to the derivation of Blake's Tree of Mystery to Milton's Tree of Knowledge modeled upon the self-rooting banyan tree of India (see Paradise Lost IX.1101-10). One might add that this species' branches invert back into the earth to form roots which resurface at a considerable distance, thus literally forming the "double rooted Labyrinth" (VIIA.85.25) to which Blake refers.

a political dictator "upheld by old repute, / Consent or custom" (I.639-40), which the revolutionary forces of Hell would overthrow; but Milton's authorial voice quickly dismisses the blasphemy. Blake, however, explicitly associates his Urizenic God with eighteenth-century Establishment politics (in this context, the bitterly ironic speech beginning "Let Moral Duty tune your tongue" [VIIA.80.3-26]). The full force of Urizen's political conservatism and Judaeo-Christian legalism brought to bear upon Orc causes Orc to lose his purity and become the contaminated serpent:

> He [Urizen] knew that weakness stretches out
> in breadth & length he knew
> That wisdom reaches high & deep & therefore he
> made Orc
> In Serpent form compelld stretch out & up the
> mysterious tree
> He sufferd him to Climb that he might draw all
> human forms
> Into submission to his will nor knew the dread
> result.
>
> (VIIA.81.2-6)

Orc becomes subverted before he ever escapes confinement. Both the Tree and the Serpent originate, then, not from Satan but, in Blake's radical revision, from God.

At this point in The Four Zoas occurs Enitharmon's dream of the temptation and Fall, a deliberate parallel to Eve's dream. Blake's major revision here is that what for Milton constituted the origin of man's evil becomes for Blake the first real prototype of regeneration.

Enitharmon is tempted not by an external serpent but by the internalized Spectre of Urthona, who represents a deeper essence of Los, amalgamating many features of Milton's Devils (e.g., armour, hideousness, bestiality, lust) which Blake accepts rather than condemns. The temptation is explicitly sexual; to succumb to it is to accept the phallic basis of life, destroying Urizen's doctrine of chastity (modeled to some extent upon Milton's in Comus).[38] Once this basis is acknowledged, the problem becomes to keep it from falling into orthodox condemnation. Enitharmon's fear of damnation almost causes her to waver back toward Milton's pessimistic theology. Like Eve, she persuades Los/Adam to eat the fruit (of her breasts, as MS illustration p. 86 depicts), in the hope that his greater strength may discover a more positive interpretation of sex than "Eternal death" (VIIA.87.18). Los' subsequent vision joins the couple together, just as Adam's vision of the final two books reunites him to Eve.[39] But the difficulty of reaching this reversal

[38] See Erdman, The Poems of William Blake, ed. Stevenson, p. 335, n.

[39] Blake draws specific parallels here. Adam and Eve's quarrels after their Fall comprise the entire scene of action of The Four Zoas until Night VIIA, at which point their reconciliation is parallel to Paradise Lost Book X, beginning with line 914 ("Forsake me not thus, Adam"), where Adam reunites with Eve: "But rise, let us no more contend . . . but strive / In offices of Love" (958-60). If the ending of Book X, then, is exactly parallel to the ending of Night VIIA, this sheds further light on Blake's intention here to mold his poem even more closely to the format of Paradise Lost, and implies that Night VIIA is structurally far more important than VIIB.

of eighteen hundred years of orthodox Christianity is immense, evidenced by Los and Enitharmon's suicidal despair after coitus (paralleling the same despair, again, in Adam and Eve), saved only by the continued presence of the Spectre.

Blake's final revision of Milton's God, then, is into a human "infant" (90.66) held in Los' arms--an echo of Jesus' incarnation and the poet's resonsibility to perceive God as wholly human, the human as wholly God. The final revision of Milton's Satan is "So Orc became / As Los a father to his brethern & he joyd in the dark lake" (90.47-8)--a striking image when viewed in its intended Miltonic context of Satan at last enjoying himself in the lake of fire. The difference between each poet's treatment of the dream-temptation, however, is that Los and Enitharmon remain, upon waking, still trapped within Albion's general dream which grips the poem. Once again, Blake evidently realizes what Milton did not, that the Fall occurs specifically as a dream state which contains all other levels of narrative action. A Vision of the Last Judgment asserts:

> I do not consider either the Just or the Wicked to be in a Supreme State but to be every one of them States of the Sleep which the Soul may fall into in its deadly dreams of Good & Evil when it leaves Paradise. (91)

Man has already fallen in both poems: not through eating a specific fruit of knowledge, but rather because he has relinquished his humanity to the false theological abstractions which Paradise Lost exonerates. Each character in Milton's epic--including Milton--participates in and re-enacts Satan's central Fall, a technique which Blake carried over into The Four Zoas. But because the poem originates in the poet, he is ultimately responsible for any errors it may contain. Hence the Fall as localized in his own vocation has the greatest repercussions and exacts a strict purging, such as Blake forces both Milton and himself to undergo by intersecting each other in the white heat of the poem.

In a sense, The Four Zoas begins with the ending of Paradise Lost and works backward, inverting each image into its opposite concept. Man begins with the fallen state as an inevitable terminus quo non, simply through the fact of his biological birth. He must penetrate backward through the closed gates of Eden, defeat his Urizenic God and thereby annul the curse of Genesis, eat of the sexual Tree of Knowledge and experience "agonie of love till now / Not felt" (IX. 858-9), reverse creation from its false structuralism,

force open the gates of Hell (the brain, heart and loins) by embracing the Spectres of Sin and Death which promptly "consume," and enter Hell to reclaim his alienated energy, whose flames become the mental flames of the final Apocalypse. Many of the concepts, narrative incidents and tropes of Blake's first epic are present in Milton's, but in flawed or compacted form which Blake liberates into his own poem. It comes as no surprise, then, that the epigram for The Four Zoas, "Rest before Labour," scrawled in pencil on the verso of the title-page, seems to be derived from Paradise Lost. Milton's context is illuminating, for it explains Blake's enigmatic inversion of a more conventional "rest after labour." Adam accepts Michael's guidance to ascend the Hill of Vision in order to perceive the terrifying but ultimately beneficent visions of man's suffering on earth:

> Ascend, I follow thee, safe Guide, the path
> Thou lead'st me, and to the hand of Heav'n submit,
> However chast'ning, to the evil turne
> My obvious brest, arming to overcom
> By suffering, and earne rest from labour won,
> If so I may attain. So both ascend
> In the Visions of God.
> (XI.371-77)

(E) CONCLUSION

An impressive body of dream-vision literature exists which Blake was familiar with and utilized with sophisticated skill in his own dream-poem, The Four Zoas. It is sometimes difficult to assess with certainty which of the works we have considered influenced Blake to what specific degree, for each shares elements in common. But the cumulative effect of these shared thematic and structural features is itself the most striking fact to emerge from our study.

Thematically, each work presents the figure of a central Dreamer who contains and is contained by his dream. He contains the dream by originating it as a sleeper who remains outside that dream, where another world exists; yet he is contained by the dream, for he is simultaneously a figure travelling through a dream landscape where everything which he encounters is a reflection of his own mind. The interplay between these two levels--wakefulness and sleep, day and night, consciousness and subconscious--constitutes a dialogue between various inflections of reality and illusion. Thus the dream-vision poem is invariably concerned with epistemology.

Yet uniquely it treats these larger motifs in concrete imagery, for abstractions per se cannot exist in a dream unless they are personified. This reaches back to the original meaning of the Greek word for dream, oneiros or "images." Conversely, every single "minute particular" of the dream carries symbolic meaning because it is by definition psychic. The dream-worlds described by Chaucer, Langland and Bunyan are so vividly kinesthetic that they seem to supplant the external world. They support Blake's affirmation in A Descriptive Catologue, "A Spirit and a Vision are . . . organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce" (37). The corollary is that phenomenal existence ("mortal and perishing nature") becomes the actual dream from which man must wake. This is accomplished not by entering one's literal dream--the inversion is never so direct--but rather by collating interior imagery with the external world in such a way that it causes a seamless visionary modality to emerge where no rigid distinction exists between the internal and the external. The way to achieve this is through reading the poem in question.

A second feature recurring in each of the dream-works we have considered is that if the Dreamer remains too long in his dream he becomes trapped, unable to wake.

In Chaucer's The Boke of the Duchesse, each persona is a variation on this theme: the Black Knight sunk deep into his melancholy, Lady Alcyone, the sleepers in the cave of Morpheus--all are refractions of the central Dreamer whose acidae in wakeful life has almost accidie/ incapacitated him. In The Hous of Fame, the emblematic statues have become so heavy with time that they are immured, like Blake's Spectres in glittering armour. In The Pilgrim's Progress, the Man in the Iron Cage, Christian imprisoned in Doubting Castle, and the sleepers of the Inchanted Ground bewitched by Madame Bubble embody a condition of prolonged despair which turns the forward pilgrimage toward New Jerusalem into immobility or outright regression back into Hell, from which there is no escape. In Paradise Lost, Eve's dream foreshadows her eventual Fall into the sleep of sin; this Fall is also present in the Devils lying stunned on a lake of fire, their sleep and gradual loss of memory analogous to Albion's in the Sea of Time and Space. Yet Milton trapped in the same mental night overcomes darkness through its use as a sanctified medium between God and the prophet.

One notes that in each of these works, the figure who prolongs sleep into an unnatural stasis is but a variation upon the Dreamer's own iconic stance, who remains implicitly behind the narrative, absorbed

into the contents of his own dream. Only the Dreamer's central presence is unconditionally real, but he is ultimately helpless and can only observe his dream until it reaches a certain degree of tension or the "ripeness of time" which enables him to assert his powers of integration. By confronting his dream personae, the Dreamer's own disunity is vividly conveyed to him, eventually compelling him to wake. Waking means the end of his dream and therefore of the poem; but it heralds his return to a reborn world, releasing the insights which the dream has bequeathed. This transition from sleep to wakefulness becomes analogous to death and resurrection, a scriptural metaphor which Blake's epic utilizes.

A third common characteristic in each of the works cited is their locale. From the beginning of the dream-vision tradition, a pastoral and idyllic dream conjoins with a terrifying or diabolical nightmare, two polarities between which the Dreamer oscillates. The positive pole is typified by the dream-garden of the Roman de la Rose, the dense woods with its singing birds of The Boke of the Duchesse and the spring meadow of the 'Prologue' to Legend of Good Women, Bunyan's refreshing halfway-houses such as the Delectable Mountains and Beulah, Langland's Middle-earth and Milton's Eden, all of which correspond to Blake's Beulah, whose dreams

are beneficial. If, however, these positive dream-states become unnaturally prolonged or if some mysterious disaster occurs therein, they instantly revert into nightmare. The negative pole invariably takes the topography of a barren desert, such as Chaucer encounters when he steps outside the confines of bookish learning; the dark valleys, precipices and pits, sloughs, dungeons, cages, and fiery holes opening in the sides of hills, forming an obstacle course which Bunyan's pilgrims must traverse; the deserts, icefields and burning lakes of Hell, Chaos with its emptiness and loss of orientation, and shattered Eden for Milton. The process whereby the pastoral dream transforms into nightmare is the crux here, for it constitutes an implicit analysis of man's Fall from innocence. Furthermore, the dream-vision poem invariably treats this transition in sexual terms.

Thomas Warton, commenting on the resemblance of Chaucer's The Hous of Fame to the Roman de la Rose, characteristically both condemns and condones them in the following terms:

> Visions were a branch of this species of poetry, which admitted the most licentious excursions of fancy in forming personifications, and in feigning imaginary beings and ideal habitations.[1]

[1] The History of English Poetry, II, 488.

His observation is accurate. Since the locale of the dream-poem is mental, it is not restricted to explicit realism or even allegory but may take any number of imaginative forms. Thus in addition to the treacherous dreamscape reflecting the difficulty of the Dreamer's quest, the works we have considered all contain Warton's "imaginary beings": Chaucer's gigantic golden Eagle, whirling house of twigs and Dame Fortune covered with eyes and ears; Langland's tongueless Dame Kynde who gibbers to him the psychological qualities he lacks to interpret his dream correctly; Bunyan's giants and "doleful Creatures" (45); Milton's grotesque Devils, Death's "vast unhide-bound corpse" (X.60) and serpentine Sin with her girdle of Hell-hounds. Just as abstractions in a dream must be embodied in vivid, often surrealistic imagery, so that imagery operates entirely through dramatic conflict, which makes it ideally suited for the epic. The Dreamer does not at first realize that the horrific forms which he encounters are reflections of his own mind; but if he accepts rather than attempts to vanquish them, the organic unity of the dream-world asserts itself. The most vivid example of this in Blake is the conclusion of Night VIIA, where Los embraces his Spectre.

Each of these authors prior to Blake steps momentarily into a negative dream landscape, but quickly withdraws in the face of overwhelming disorientation back to a safe vantage point of premature wakefulness, where the dream can be molded into poetic form. It remained for The Four Zoas to fully enter the nightmare and refuse (or be unable) to emerge until it transcended itself through its own imagery into a truly wakeful state.

The difficulties of such a resolution are inherent within what we might now consider as the structural effects of the dream. Prior to Blake, no other dream-work transcribed the actual processes of the dream to such a homogeneous extent, for at first sight those conditions would seem inimical to esthetic form. Blake's victory, however, was to utilize the actual characteristics of the dreaming mind as those of poetic form. These characteristics may briefly be divided into dream-time and dream-space.

No causal linear time exists as such in the dream, but rather a flowing present which subsumes both the past and future. Richard Grossinger's analysis of dream mechanisms is pertinent: "In the waking world we tend to bounce off things, to touch upon surfaces without penetrating; narrative hews stubbornly to time.

In the dreaming world all things eventually are converted to their centre . . .it substitutes intensity for time."[2] The traditional dream-poem utilized this quality for its ambivalence: a dream event may be a reflection of one's past or even the remains of an undigested meal; yet equally it may be precognitive. Chaucer remains content with an urbane suspension of judgment here, playing off these facets against each other, for he is basically an observer, a kind of poetic Marco Polo. Bunyan treats dreams as accurate predictions of particularly the Last Judgment, conveyed by God; Milton's Eve dreams her future sin in exact replica. Though the retrospective and clairvoyant aspects of the dream are present in Blake, his dream-poem actualizes past and future within a fluid present. That is, he forces his dramatic personae to enter the present as the only genuine modality: the more it is experienced with the naked being, the more it loses its strictures and envelops both the past and future. This is not simply a conceptual tenet, but rather a structural device which underpins the poem through a variety of unique technical means. The traditional linear plot is replaced by sudden condensations:

[2]"The Dreaming," Io, 8, 1971 (2nd ed., 1974), p. 146.

copulation may be followed by immediate birth; characters are reborn as children who try to find a way out of their tragic impasse; a single instant expands into many pages, or, conversely, Christian history condenses into the final pages of Night VIII.[3] Blake's poem deliberately lacks overt transitional links, for it attempts to depict the single instant of Albion's initial Fall, followed by the timelessness of deep sleep and the shifting temporal rhythms imposed by the various dream phantasma. Recorded linear history is represented by the literal period of Albion's sleep; but since he is unconscious throughout most of the poem, this exists as an external framework which contains the field of action, fundamentally invisible for the struggling figures locked within the dream. Since the dream occurs only in the present tense, falling asleep becomes synonymous with waking. Even when it summons the past, that past is so imagistically vivid that it blends into the present again. Thus a series of flashbacks throughout The Four Zoas traps both the

[3] The condensation of time in dreams appears in Blake from his earliest poems. The virgin of "The Angel" in Songs of Experience dreams her transition from youth to old age, but is afraid of the obvious meaning of her dream. Again, the first real prototype of Albion's sleep is present in Enitharmon's dream in Europe, where "eighteen hundred years were fled / As if they had not been" (13. 10-11), and "Man was a Dream!" (8.2). I examine Blake's early use of dreams in Chapter VI.

protagonists and the reader into trying to unravel time into a single definitive account of the Fall. The contradictions, however, are deliberate, forcing one to realize eventually that Albion's dissolution did not occur merely in some distant prehistory but rather takes place every instant and is, in fact, the futile attempt to deny the present by tying it to the past. When, instead, one abandons oneself to the present, as do each of the Zoas beginning with Urizen in Night IX, the fabric of linear temporality collapses in an Apocalypse. It remains to be said that the reader's difficulty in confronting the poem is precisely equivalent to the characters' difficulties within the poem.

Finally, three-dimensional space cannot exist as such in the dream, but rather is a modulation of protean mental forms. No single perspective can be maintained as inviolate; inevitably it sheds its outline, blending with other forms in constant flux, destroying the difference between metaphoric tenor and vehicle. As James Hillman states, "Dreams show us to be plural . . . Only by falling apart into the multiple figures do we extend consciousness to embrace and contain its psychopathic potentials."[4] This metamorphosis which

[4] The Dream and the Underworld, p. 41.

Blake's personae undergo is a noteworthy formal characteristic of the dream which contains a multitude of equally valid perspectives, from worm to animals to angels to the background matrix itself, all representing intimate aspects of the single Dreamer. Furthermore, one cannot become extinct in the dream; though one may die repeatedly, one merely changes into something else. When this process is perceived negatively, it becomes predatory consumption, as Enitharmon laments: "Life lives upon Death & by devouring appetite / All things subsist on one another" (VIIA.87.19-20). When it is perceived positively, it becomes mutual inter-penetration generated by the love, forgiveness and "intellectual War" (IX.139.9) embodied by the poem.